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# CLASSIC BIKE • GUIDE



TRIUMPH

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Some of the components and accessories featured in the photograph may not be a part of the standard fitment.





- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
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**CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE** #292  
AUGUST 2015

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## FRANK WESTWORTH

### TYRED OUT

**IT IS SO VERY** British to complain about the weather that I hate it when I read someone doing it – complaining about the weather, that is. Everyone everywhere gets weather, is my view; why should anyone waste space droning on about it? But they do. Sometimes it feels impossible to escape it. Do you read a motorcycle magazine to read about the weather? Me neither.

Another thing I find irritating – one of many things, worryingly – is when the 'editor's welcome' (as it used to be called, back in the days when men were men, girls were girls and publishers were presumably publishers) reads something like 'Welcome to the magazine! Inside we have some great bikes! Hope you have a great time reading about these great bikes in our great magazine!'

I've decided to do both of these things, just to be especially irritating. I have just glanced out of the office window, and a drizzly summer shower is all over the glass; the fog's drifting in from the ocean and if I was outside I would be soaking wet and if I was on a shiny bike I'd be really very grumpy indeed. But I'm not outside. I'm inside. Tomorrow ... tomorrow I'll be outside and out on the bike. By then this issue of CBG will be whizzing off to the printers and the sun will be shining. And if it's not ... I will not care.

We have a remarkable array of bikes for you inside the magazine. Take my word for it. I'm not going to bore you with a list of what they are and how great they are, because you are perfectly capable of reading ... I hope. Consider each of the bikes – this is what I do when I read magazines about bikes – and decide how much less great they are than your own. It's not always entirely easy to do this convincingly, especially when your best bike has decided that it doesn't want to behave at the moment, but try anyway. Have a good old British sneer – even if you're not in fact British you know how they go. Curl that upper lip. Mutter 'Who would want one of those heaps?' Then smile smugly. Grab your helmet, wrap up warm for the summer, and go for a spin. Tea shops, coffee shops, cafés with pies are calling...

That's it. See you out there.

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## Zero style

■ **Above:** It looks ancient. It is not. It is modern. Mostly...

**WHEN PAUL BEAMISH**, the MD at Krazy Horse in Bury St Edmunds, first saw Zero Engineering's machines he was won over by the Japanese workshop's design philosophy and attention to detail. Using a traditional, torque V-twin, Zero drew inspiration from the concepts of wabi wabi (austere refinement) and the beauty of the raw materials to incorporate the essence of wa (harmony) into their designs. The result is a range of minimalistic, vintage-looking bikes that combine high-tech function and traditional form, based around a rigid, gooseneck frame, springer front forks and spoked wheels, with many components deliberately left in a bare-metal finish.

The frame may look like a classic but it's a completely re-engineered modern component that employs top-grade steel tubing of varying thickness and specification to best achieve the firm's goal of rigidity with flexibility. Zero explains why it went to such lengths: "Without the extra weight and soft rear suspension of a typical cruiser soaking up all the vibrations and brute force of a large V-twin, these rigid bikes lay down the power like no other. The combination of a rigid frame and so much torque is truly shocking to first time riders. Absolute, reliable, super fine control over the engine is a must." The result, it says, is a rigid motorcycle but one built into a frame that has been designed to bend strategically so "this bike has the flexibility necessary for longer journeys and one-day touring."

The Type 5 seen here is Zero's signature model and comes with the five-speed 1340cc Evo engine in silver or black and chrome finishes. The 74" springer forks are modified from the original drum brake configuration to accept disc brakes for better stopping power and are tailored to each model to match its mass and engine output.

The Type 5 also features Zero's unique aluminium fuel tank, hand-crafted in Japan and that solo saddle is set just 25 inches from the ground. Combined with the bike's narrow profile, the low seat height and flat bars make it ideal for the urban environment. Each bike is built by hand and takes several months to complete, with just four models available in the UK from Krazy Horse. There is, of course, an extensive range of options to ensure that each Zero is nothing quite like any other, including an open primary drive and dry clutch, brass trims, hand-sewn saddles and so on. Prices start at £17,995. See [krazyhorse.co.uk](http://krazyhorse.co.uk)







**MASH  
FLAT-TRACKER**  
Limited edition retro moto  
P22



**GRAND PRIX  
REPLICA**  
Triumph's rare TT winner  
P26



**MORINI STRADA**  
Getting ready for  
a grand tour  
P32

## Norton parts, by appointment

### THE NORVIL MOTORCYCLE

**CO** offers a rapid worldwide mail order delivery service. Gone are the days when you needed to wait until the next jumble to buy your parts, or had to pop around to its shop in Staffordshire to collect vital components for your Commando (or any other kind of classic Norton, come to that). Almost everything is ordered online or over the phone these days – which is why Norvil produces a huge catalogue that lists almost all of the 5000-plus spares it stocks.

However, the family firm does still provide that personal touch. Its customer service counter now opens to the general public by pre-arranged appointment only. This is because Les Emery, Norvil's walking, talking reference library and in-house expert, likes to see and serve the counter customers himself whenever possible. So if you want to purchase parts in person and consult the oracle while you're at it, taking advantage of his decades of expertise with the marque, then you'll need to book yourself in on 01543 278008. Alternatively, you can order your parts for home delivery, 24 hours a day, at [norvilmotorcycle.co.uk](http://norvilmotorcycle.co.uk)



## Giant jumble adds auction

**THE ANNUAL EUROJUMBLE** at Netley Marsh always attracts huge crowds from across the south of the UK and from the continent. This year, visitors have an additional reason to arrive early and bring stacks of cash, in the shape of a classic auction.

Hosted by Charterhouse, the sale will take place on Friday, September 4, the first of the event's two days, with all manner of machines, parts, spares and accessories set to go under the hammer. Already, some extremely interesting machines have been consigned to the sale, including the 1933 AJS V-twin seen below, which comes with an incomplete sidecar and is expected to fetch up to £25,000. Another Matchless outfit dates from 1926 and is reputedly one of only 60 made (estimate £15,000 to £20,000).

At the other end of the scale, quick bidders might also snap up a 1963 Norton Jubilee for £1500; a 1957 Velo Valiant for £2000, a 1937 Ariel Red Hunter for £3000 or even a Francis-Barnett Falcon for £500. The sale will take place from 1pm, with viewing from 9am. Charterhouse will be receiving lots on the Thursday, and successful purchasers can collect their machines immediately after the auction on the Friday, or on Saturday, September 5.

Charterhouse is now accepting further entries on 01935 812277. Discounted advance tickets are now on sale from 01507 529529 and [classicbikeshows.com](http://classicbikeshows.com)

## Great guards



**IT MAY BE** de rigueur to do without mudguards, but if you ride any distance in inclement weather then you'll appreciate the protection they provide – especially if you have to spend hours cleaning up a mud-spattered mess... These stainless steel items are quality Italian-made mudguards, especially sourced by Hitchcocks Motorcycles to fill the gap created by the sudden lack of availability of the Indian-made items. Featuring rolled edges, they are supplied with a highly-polished finish and are available in four sizes to suit 19 and 21 inch front wheels and 18 and 19 inch rears. Prices start at £43 plus VAT and delivery.





# Classics at Cheltenham

**REGENCY SPLENDOUR AND** classic street-cred collide on August 23 when Cheltenham's elegant town hall and its surrounding Imperial Gardens host the first Cheltenham Festival of Bikes from 11am to 6pm.

The organisers promise a spectacular showcase of the UK's finest motorcycles, ranging from beautiful and exquisite classic and vintage two-wheelers, and brilliantly-engineered customs, to rare race specials, café racers and brat style motorcycles.

Alongside 100 or more stunning show bikes, will be a programme of skills workshops covering topics like seat upholstery, airbrushing, pinstriping and general restoration hints and tips. A broad range of exhibitors and traders will be inside the town hall, selling everything from accessories and parts to clothing and helmets, with additional traders setting up stall outside in the Imperial Gardens. Look out for author Zoe Cano, signing copies of her book 'Bonneville Go or Bust', then chill out with a coffee or cold beer and listen to live music from the city's fine buskers. Then spend a while longer admiring the bikes – you'll often be able to chat to the builder and go home with technical trade secrets to try...

Advance tickets cost £9 from [festivalofbikes.com](http://festivalofbikes.com)



## DIARYDATES

### AUGUST 1-2

**International Motorcycle Festival**, the Pavilion, Llangollen, Wales. 07960 693398/[lanbikefest.co.uk](http://lanbikefest.co.uk)

### AUGUST 2

**Calstock Classic Show Tamar Valley**, Cornwall. 01822 617010 [calstockbikeshow.co.uk](http://calstockbikeshow.co.uk)

### AUGUST 3-8

**Ulster Grand Prix**, Lisburn BT28 3TA. [ulstergrandprix.net](http://ulstergrandprix.net)

### AUGUST 7-9

**Rock 'n' Bike Show**, Squires Cafe Bar, Leeds LS25 5LX. [yorkshirerocknbikeshow.co.uk](http://yorkshirerocknbikeshow.co.uk)

### AUGUST 8

**Classic racing**, Aintree Circuit, Liverpool. 01294 823582

### AUGUST 9

**Mods & Rockers motorbike and scooter show**, town centre, King's Lynn. [west-norfolk.gov.uk/bikeshow](http://west-norfolk.gov.uk/bikeshow)

### AUGUST 14-15

**Beezumph rally & track day**, Cadwell Park. [beezumph.com](http://beezumph.com)

### AUGUST 15-16

**Ramsgate Sprint Revival**, Undercliff and Government Acre, Ramsgate, Kent. [ramsgatesprintrevival.com](http://ramsgatesprintrevival.com)

### AUGUST 15

**Scorton Autojumble**, North Yorks Events Centre DL10 6EJ. 07909 904705

### AUGUST 16

**Popham Megameet**, A303, Basingstoke. [popham-airfield.co.uk](http://popham-airfield.co.uk)

**Festival of Motorcycling**, Brackley town centre NN13 7AB. [brackleyfestivalofmotorcycling.co.uk](http://brackleyfestivalofmotorcycling.co.uk)

### AUGUST 23

**Cheltenham Festival of Bikes**, Town Hall and Imperial Park, Cheltenham. [festivalofbikes.com](http://festivalofbikes.com)

**Newark Autojumble**, Newark and Notts Showground NG24 2NY 01507 529470 [newarkautojumble.co.uk](http://newarkautojumble.co.uk)

**Rat, Brat, Bobbers & Chopper Day**, Ace Cafe, London NW10 7UD [ce-cafe-london.com](http://ce-cafe-london.com)

### AUGUST 29-31

**Isle of Man Classic TT**. [iomtt.com](http://iomtt.com)





## Triple treat

**THE 24TH BEEZUMPH RALLY** promises to be a totally tripetastic occasion, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the introduction of the Triumph Trident T160.

Organised and run by the Trident and Rocket 3 Owners' Club, Beezumph takes place on August 14-15 at Cadwell Park. Always up for a challenge, the TR3OC aims to assemble a display of 160 T160s at the event. Can you help them reach their goal?

All T160 variants are welcome to take part, including the standard production models, Slippery Sam replicas, the Legend and Renegade offshoots produced by LP Williams, police-issue Cardinal machines and any one-off specials based around T160 bikes. Each participant who displays a T160-engined machine will receive a commemorative certificate marking his or her involvement. Of course, the rally is



not just restricted to T160s or indeed to BSA and Triumph triples – there's plenty for British bike enthusiasts to admire during the two-day event, with track sessions for all motorcycles and opportunities to meet guest riders and factory personnel from the heyday of the original British bike industry.



## Bright beam

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### SEPTEMBER 4

Charterhouse Auction of classic and collectible motorcycles, at Eurojumble, Netley Marsh, charterhouse-auction.com/01935 812277

### SEPTEMBER 4-5

The Carole Nash Eurojumble, Netley Marsh, Southampton, SO40 7GY. [classicbikeshows.com](http://classicbikeshows.com) 01507 529529

### SEPTEMBER 5

Bonhams Auction of collectors' motorcycles, International Autojumble, National Motor Museum, Beaulieu. [bonhams.com/0208 963 2817](http://bonhams.com/0208 963 2817)

### SEPTEMBER 12-13

Borders Classic Bike Show, Lacon Childe School, Cleobury Mortimer DY14 8PE. 01299 270642

### SEPTEMBER 19-20

Kickback, the national custom bike show, Donington Park. [thecustomshow.com](http://thecustomshow.com)

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■ **Above:** Vincents on parade, many of them showing signs of the long riding lives they've lived

■ **Below:** Buddy Stubbs; rather more than just a Harley dealer

# Buddy Stubbs' Motorcycle Museum

*This collection of 130 or more machines appears like an oasis in the Arizona desert, an oasis gleaming with antique steel...*

WORDS & PHOTOS BY NOLAN WOODBURY

**EVEN AN OCEAN** of shiny new Harley-Davidsons fail to mask what's nearest and dearest to motorcycle collector Buddy Stubbs. Being a Harley dealer, Stubbs keeps a good number of home market builds on hand, but the museum represents 37 different manufacturers from 11 different countries, dating back to 1903.

Very much a celebrity in the motorcycling world, Stubbs was riding 'pillion' with his mother in her husband's sidecar before he was born. After learning the craft in his father's Midwestern bike shop, early adulthood saw Buddy generate a successful flat-track racing career which included a win at Daytona in 1963. Then he sold everything and moved to Arizona in 1966.

"I was introduced to the Hollywood scene by Bud Ekins," Buddy explained about his time on

the silver screen. "I managed the motorcycle fleet for Robert Blake's 1973 classic *'Electra Glide in Blue'* and worked stunts for the hit TV series *'Then Came Bronson'*. I made so many appearances, the producers forced me to register with the Screen Actors Guild."

Now that his sons Steve and Frank manage the daily affairs at two large dealerships, Stubbs has a little more time for his museum projects and for reflecting on the past. "I had fun working in that environment and getting to know those guys. Blake is one of the few people I've met who is shorter than me."

Packed sardine-tight, Buddy's collection reflects what's important to him. Those interested only in gleaming restorations might walk right past many of the machines on display here, but don't mistake that







for meaning there's a lack of shine inside. Stubbs has proven he'll go to great lengths to keep a bike original, even if it's less than a perfect specimen. "I have a lot of options for riding," Buddy says, providing a great understatement. Obvious pride is shown for a very rare 1953 Harley KR Scrambler and an Ekins-edition Goldie dirt racer, but it's the Matchless powered AJS Model 38 that stops me where I stand. "No one captures elegance like the English," says Stubbs, running his hand over an immaculate BSA 650 Lightning. "The pride is obvious."

For years Stubbs has hunted for the motorcycles he's wanted, but the museum's draw has provided some unique opportunities. "Riders and collectors visiting the museum have brought a few of them to me," he explained. One such acquisition was a Healey 1000, the four-cylinder development of Ariel's famous Square. "A fellow visiting from Tucson took great interest in the Ariels on display, then told me he knew of another that might be available. He asked me if I knew what a Healey was. I did!"

Enjoying the warm hospitality, we are relaxing in Buddy's private office when I notice a fully equipped workshop where bikes are serviced or repaired. I soon feel comfortable enough to ask Buddy about the obvious lack of big bore Japanese and European classics, then toss in a few of my favourites for reference. To his credit, each was acknowledged, but

**Top left:** It's unusual enough to see a 1938 AJS Model 2 in the UK, never mind in Arizona

**Above right:** Crammed in a corner, a 1977 OHC 500 Ducati proves that it's worth paying attention to all the exhibits when you visit this collection

**Above left:** There's no hint of over-restoration in this 1953 home-grown enduro hero, the KRM Enduro from Harley-D

**Right:** The thrust of the museum's interest lies over the water, with many very fine Brits on show, like this exceptional Sunbeam S7



it's clear that this collection represents an era that Stubbs knows intimately.

It's worth a visit if you're in town and worth going out of your way for if you're not. There's no admission charge. Perhaps you'll be further enticed by one of the many customer appreciation days and charity events the family hosts and there's plenty of new Harleys to look over too. "Working on this stuff is all I've ever known," concludes Stubbs. All said, that's a great deal of knowledge.

See [buddystubbshd.com](http://buddystubbshd.com) **CBC**



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# Victor victorious

*The name says it all. This one was a real winner*

WORDS & PHOTOS BY FRANK MELLING

■ **Above:** BSA claimed that you 'twist the throttle at any speed over idle and either the front wheel comes off the ground or the rear wheel tries to catch the front, or both happen at the same time.' They weren't far wrong

**LIKE DUCATI'S SCRAMBLER**, the Victor Special was all about motocross competition and how success on the world stage influenced road bike sales. Unlike the later Ducati, which looked good but was far from competitive, the BSA scrambler was a winner.

BSA won the 500cc world motocross championship in 1964 and 1965 and made sure everyone knew about it with full-page adverts in the motorcycle press – particularly in America, where exports sales were up for grabs. "Jeff Smith clinches his second consecutive world championship in the tough high-speed scrambles series," blared the headline. "Once again BSA power and stamina beat larger machines ridden by top motocross experts. No wonder more and more top riders are turning to BSA for trophy-winning power!"

So this explains the 'Victor' designation. It was a bike that was directly related to world championship motocross success. However, this particular world-beater had rather more humble roots. The Victor GP racer was very much the younger, bigger brother of the

innocuous 250cc BSA C15 road bike, a machine that was never intended for racing.

By the time it transmuted into the Victor, the 441cc bike had been bored and stroked and the power vastly increased. What had been retained – almost – was the C15's light weight. For a factory motocross machine, this was ideal. A works Victor was some 100lb lighter than a DBD34 Gold Star and, although the Victor's engine made 12bhp less than the Goldie, the handling and acceleration were vastly better. The works machines needed performance, not longevity. If a factory machine lasted the 40 minutes, plus two laps, of motocross GP then its job was done. There was an unlimited supply of new bits to keep the bikes fresh and clever mechanics to ensure the bikes were in race winning condition.

So far, so good. The problems began when BSA decided to cash in on their success by converting the already fragile Victor works bikes into production machines. In fact, the first Victors to be sold were





■ **Above left:** Did BSA really call their paint 'Spectramaster Yellow'? If so, then it's worth buying a Victor for that alone

■ **Above right:** BSA fans will recognise this front brake from earlier models. Which does not reduce its efficiency, which is considerable

■ **Right:** They are also loud – very loud if treated to a little twistgrip enthusiasm. No passenger could stand it for long...

■ **Far right:** The extra lever for the attention of your left hand is a decompressor. The wise rider learns how to operate it if actually starting the bike is called for



pure race machines. It was only later that the road versions appeared. The brochure boasted of all the race-proven features – a rugged cradle frame of Reynolds 531 tubing with a reinforced head lug and a large diameter top tube.

Light alloy was everywhere, in the polished mudguards, petrol tank and cylinder head, with a chrome-plated bore for the barrel. Dual air filters. Chrome-moly fork legs with double-action impact and rebound damping. A 'specially strengthened' crankcase with heavy duty built-up flywheel assembly, roller bearings and a full pressure oiling system. Folding footrests, sports solo seat and reinforced handlebars completed the package.

Yet, from the outset, the Victors were beset with problems. Mechanically, in regular use, the bikes were not robust. The C15-derived gearbox and clutch were always fragile and, when put into the hands of less than mechanically sensitive owners, they became a real issue. Similarly, the big end and main bearings were right on the edge of their design limit and provided BSA dealers with ample spare parts sales. The Lucas electrics were also a nightmare – pun intended – particularly in their Energy Transfer form that, theoretically at least, allowed the bike to run without a battery.

Even at the time of their launch in 1966, the Victors seemed very old fashioned. A beginner could kick a Victor until he was blue in the face and the thing still wouldn't start. Alternatively, he could buy a Honda and ride away seconds after he had pressed the electric starter button.

## PRICE GUIDE

£3000 to £5000

## FAULTS & FOIBLES

Similar models produced simultaneously. Victor Enduro used C15T frame among other changes, while other models adopted components from the GP/Special – so it is always worth checking exactly what you're buying...

## ALSO CONSIDER

BSA B44 Victor Roadster or Shooting Star (no off-road ambitions, easier to start and live with, cheaper). BSA B50 (next generation/final incarnation unit single. Handsome but expensive). Triumph TR5T (similar MX style, an extra cylinder, less aggravation, more ££)

## SPECIALIST INFO

Substantial archive for non-commercial d/load at: [bsaunitsingles.com](http://bsaunitsingles.com)

## OWNERS' CLUB

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**BUY IT NOW**

This extra-special, much-modded Victor is up for grabs at £5k at Owens Moto Classics, and features a Terry Meade GP frame, twin-plug Fred Barlow cylinder head with Daytona valves, beefed up bottom end, close-ratio gearbox, Ceriani forks, billet yokes, Maico wheels and much more. Has done less than a thousand miles since its full refurbishment

The Victor also needed to be ridden with a degree of circumspection. A nice Victor is theoretically capable of something in the region of 85mph flat out. The problem is that ridden like this the motor will self-destruct in hours – which isn't that much of a problem because the vibration will have killed the rider long before the engine blows up.

What the Victor does do well is accelerate hard. It rides like a 250cc machine that has been taking a large dose of illegal steroids. This is hardly surprising because the Victor actually is a 250cc machine that





**Above:** The wide bars on this machine (BSA were a little more conservative) and rearward footrests make for superlative handling. These bikes are really easy to lay down and scratch as hard as you like

has been taking a large dose of illegal steroids.

Victors came in various flavours from pure road bike to our test bike, which is the best of all: the Victor Special. We have the Americans to thank for this bike because in 1967 US customers were screaming for dirt bike-styled road machines, and none was better looking than the Victor Special.

All the motocross machine's featherlight weight was retained, along with the race-derived front forks, fuel tank and paint job. The front wheel was BSA's highly effective seven-inch unit and meant the bike could

stop on a sixpence. In fact, the Victor was potentially a generation ahead of anything else in the world. But 'whats' and 'ifs' litter history and no more so than with the Victor. If BSA – which had the capital and resources at the time – had built a reliable overhead cam engine with a bulletproof, five-speed gearbox and fault-free electrics, then the Victor was destined to be the first, successful, dual sport bike and would have been a motorcycling icon. But it didn't.

So should you buy a Victor today? Strangely, the answer is yes and for a number of reasons. First, the Victor Special is a real looker. If you hanker after being the motocross star you never were when you were 16 years old, nothing will excite like the red BSA logo on the polished alloy and Spectramaster Yellow fuel tank. Next, the bikes are pretty well sorted now. An easily fitted electronic ignition makes starting much easier and that fragile gearbox is fine, now the motor is not being revved to oblivion and the gears are not being stamped in without using the clutch.

Used as a classic bike the performance is very acceptable. The engine is punchy and, if the revs are kept down, the vibration is fun and full of 'character', rather than self-destructive. The Victor is feather-light at around 260lb on the road. It's super slim and incredibly easy to ride. In short, you can have a great Sunday afternoon ride and be surrounded by admirers.

There is also more good news. BSA made a lot of Victors and the bikes are not uncommon. A ready supply of the bike means a nice, clean, useable Victor could be yours for around £3500 and with the current sky-high values of classic bikes, that's something of a bargain. **CBG**



**MANUFACTURED:** 1965 to 68 **ENGINE:** Air cooled OHV single  
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# Retro moto

*The limited edition Von Dutch flat-tracker is a motorcycle made up of multiple contradictions, stylishly resolved by international ingenuity*

PHOTOS BY MASH UK

▲ Above: Ignore the '500' competition number, the engine is a 400 and it's a single, despite the twinned exhausts

**THE VON DUTCH** is a new bike, but it's built to look like an old bike. It uses modern technology, but blends that with a 30-year-old engine design. Mash is a French marque but the machines are mostly made in China and that motor is itself an adaptation of a Japanese blueprint. Mash 400s are mainly aimed at newer riders looking for a user-friendly first 'big bike', but they happen to be equally ideal for an older rider who can't hack kicking over a classic big single any longer. Meet the machine that perfectly squares all these circles...

Mash may be a new name in the UK but it's well

established on the Continent and the company sold over 2000 bikes in its French homeland last year. This new brand of retro motos has been developed as an offshoot of SIMA, whose association with all things mechanical goes back some 30 years (you may know them from their connection with Gas Gas trials bikes and Hyosung scooters). Mash motorcycles are built around clear design philosophies, tested and approved by SIMA and each new model passes through many prototypes before being signed off for production.

As seen with the Von Dutch Limited Edition, Mash





■ **Below left:** Von Dutch is all about style. Like wrapping brown leather around the instrument pods. Unusual

■ **Above left:** Every single Von Dutch is signed by an artist

■ **Above:** Brown abounds; even the bar grips are one shade, while the seat – handsome in leather – is another shade and the paint is yet another. Brown is the new black, obviously

■ **Right:** Simplicity is the key and exhaust bandage is a style statement



motorcycles are styled to recreate a specific feel from the 1960s or 70s. They typically pay tribute to a successful format that has proved itself time and again for over a century – two wheels with an engine slung in between them. There's minimal clutter so you can clap eyes – or spanners – on all the important bits. "The quality of the build and construction is all on show," says Richard Johnstone of the UK importer, "and it's part of the overall visual package, so you cannot hide bad craftsmanship."

Quality control is an important issue where Mash are concerned. They make no bones whatsoever about the multinational nature of their bikes and are far from unique in having major components for their products made in the Far East. Mash join major manufacturers like Triumph and BMW who utilise global production capacity and just like the big boys they are confident enough to offer a two-year warranty. "The key to getting the best out of Chinese manufacturing is supervision and control," says Johnstone, "and that is why there are SIMA people in China overseeing the manufacturing."

As it happens, Mash has taken over where the Japanese left off. For many years the Mash engine was built by Shineray in China for a major Japanese motorcycle manufacturer. When it was finally discontinued in the original line-up, Shineray offered the motor to other marques. Enter Mash, who initially housed the engine in a classically-styled Roadstar model and followed that up with the Von Dutch special edition.

Sorry. Von who? If you don't recognise the name then you're not alone. UK dealers often describe

#### PRICE GUIDE

Standard Roadstar £3799 new  
Ex-demos from £3250

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

Too early to say: build quality and fit/finish appear solid but only time will tell. Feedback from owners is welcome!

#### ALSO CONSIDER

Yamaha SR400 (available new for £5200, kickstart only, proven track record). Enfield Continental GT 535 (available new for £4999, steep depreciation), Honda XBR/GB500 (more performance, prices between £2k and £5 depending on age and condition)

#### SPECIALIST INFO

[mashmotorcycles.co.uk](http://mashmotorcycles.co.uk)

#### OWNERS' CLUB

Not yet, but plenty of activity on Facebook: search for MASH UK



There are precious few Von Dutch models still available to buy in the UK. If you're quick, this one at North Cornwall Motorcycles on the Devon border may still be available at £5399. See [nmc.co.uk](http://nmc.co.uk)

the Von Dutch as a flat-tracker or 'Steve McQueen' bike, aware that the Von Dutch moniker isn't too well known here. It rings big bells with the international custom crowd, however. Back in the 1950s and 60s, Von Dutch was credited with having changed the face of American custom car culture and a certain Mr S McQueen sent many of his new motorcycles to Von Dutch for custom paintwork. Just 200 Mash Von Dutch machines will be built and only 20 of these will be imported to the UK.

Each of the special edition bikes is assembled in France using parts supplied by the Von Dutch concern and each one is signed and numbered by the individual artist at Von Dutch who completed the





■ **Main:** A miraculous approach to physics reveals that sidestands are unnecessary! In fact, the Von Dutch is certainly handsome, joking aside...

■ **Top:** Nothing brown about the neat, conventional single-disc front end

■ **Above:** Continuing the retro belt 'n' braces approach, the Von Dutch has a kickstart in case riders feel like a little kicking is in order

work. Each machine comes with a signed authenticity document from the UK importer. Dozens of detail touches make the Von Dutch stand out from the crowd – wrapped exhaust, leather belts and buckles, braced handlebars, dinky indicators, fork gaiters, trendy Metzeler Karoo2 boots and a tasteful take on the 'antique copper' colour scheme that is all the rage right now. It's got the look, that's for sure.

And if the air-cooled overhead cam engine feels familiar, that's because you've seen something like it before in Honda's XBR500 and GB500 big singles. Back when it was a Honda, the 498cc motor was unusual in using some sophisticated top-end technology (a radial, four-valve combustion chamber) to generate its 44bhp. The Shineray version that powers the Mash is slightly smaller at 398cc. It has gained Siemens fuel injection and has catalytic converters tucked away inside the traditional, Brit-style silencers. Like the original it comes with a kick and electric start, but now produces 29bhp – exactly the same as Enfield's 535cc Continental GT, since you asked. Power on the Mash peaks at 7000rpm, while top torque is delivered at 5500rpm, with the revs limited to 8500rpm.

All of this translates to a clean getaway in fifth gear from around 40mph, smoothly up to 70 or

so. Thereafter, riders report that things can get a little harsh, both from vibration and wind buffeting, but the bike will take you to 85mph if you insist. However, the big wide bars on the Von Dutch aren't ideal for sustained high-speed riding and that would be missing the point with a bike of this type. It's best at point 'n' squirt on city streets and rural backroads. You may notice some fluffing around 3500rpm, but fine-tuning fuel injection on big singles can be tricky (as any BMW F650 owner will know). On longer runs, expect to get up to 70mpg and for a tankful of fuel to carry you nearly 200 miles.

Sticking with the 'keep it simple' theme, riders won't need to faff around endlessly adjusting the suspension. You can bump up the pre-load on the twin shocks, but that's your lot. It turns out to be more than good enough. The pliant front end obligingly soaks up speed humps and road ripples alike, providing a surprisingly comfortable ride and reasonable roadholding. The single front disc brake requires some pressure at the lever, but delivers decently controllable deceleration without any danger of nipping up the front wheel. That's useful for newer riders and experienced hands alike – especially for classic enthusiasts who may be more accustomed to gentle drum brakes than fierce, fully-floating double disc set-ups.

More Mash models are in the pipeline, including a scrambler and a café racer. Several of the 40 dealers across the UK have demo Roadstar models available, but the Von Dutch bikes are so exclusive that the first ride is reserved for the first owner. **CBG**

**ENGINE:** Air-cooled 398cc four-valve OHC single **POWER:** 29bhp @ 7000rpm  
**TORQUE:** 22lb/ft @ 5500rpm **GEARBOX:** Five-speed, foot change **FRAME:** Tubular steel cradle  
**FRONT SUSPENSION:** 35mm tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin shocks  
**FRONT BRAKE:** 280mm single disc **REAR BRAKE:** 160mm drum **FRONT TYRE:** 19 inch  
**REAR TYRE:** 18 inch **SEAT HEIGHT:** 780mm **WEIGHT:** 151kg **TOP SPEED:** 88mph



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# Grand Prix glory

*When big singles still ruled the road-racing world, Triumph astonished everyone by taking the Senior Manx Grand Prix title with a twin...*

WORDS & PHOTOS BY RICHARD JONES

■ **Above:** The whole purpose of a replica is to recreate the spirit and performance of an unobtainable original. This does that

■ **Below:** Do fast engines demand fatter sparks? We should be told

**IN AUGUST 1946** a 32-year-old Irishman called Ernest William Lyons won the Senior Manx Grand Prix riding a Triumph, beating 67 other riders. Lyons finished ahead of runner-up Ken Bills by over two minutes.

The conditions were absolutely appalling, with heavy rain throughout the race. At the finish it was discovered that the frame downtube on Ernie's bike was broken. Despite this, Lyons led from start to finish and completed his ride, so it was said, with his leathers soaked and goggles half-filled with water. This was something to celebrate, as Triumph had not won on the Isle of Man since 1908 when Jack Marshall had taken the laurels in the single-cylinder TT. Unsurprisingly, the bike that carried Lyons to victory in 1946 was no ordinary machine from Meriden.

Edward Turner was no great fan of road racing, so the preparatory work went on without his knowledge. Freddie Clarke, a pre-war Brooklands record-breaker and chief of the Triumph technical department, along with colleagues Frank Barker and Ernie Nott, built a prototype racing engine in 1946. They took a standard Tiger 100 bottom end and mated it with

a set of aluminium cylinder heads and barrels, with squared-off fins, as used on the wartime portable generator developed by Triumph for use in Wellington bombers. Still without Turner's knowledge, Clarke tested the result on the Meriden dynamometer and notched up 40bhp at 7200rpm – promising indeed, at a time when the firm's sporting roadster's output was 28bhp at 6000rpm.

The GP engine initially ran 8.3:1 pistons with lightened and polished valvetrain, a four-speed close-ratio gearbox, twin Amal carburettors mounted on a special inlet manifold and a polished crank with roller bearings. Just about every aspect of the engine was specially prepared, from the solid alloy pushrods to the hard-chromed tappets. It was slotted into a standard, single downtube T100 frame and fitted with megaphone pipes, rearsets, dropped bars, aluminium wheel rims and a 4.5 gallon fuel tank.

The rear suspension was novel for the time. In 1938 Edward Turner had designed a sprung rear hub to provide a small amount of suspension movement for the rear wheel. Essentially it was a set of coil springs encased within a large alloy hub so the wheel could move a couple of inches. Although it was soon







■ **Left:** Lights? Nope, just action. Isn't it ... narrow!

■ **Above:** That is one serious breather pipe... though it's not big enough to obscure the sprung hub, one of Mr Turner's many eccentric inventions

■ **Above right:** The engine is running, explaining neatly why the brake pedal needs to carry a toe-guard

■ **Below right:** Although the eyes are drawn to the generator-type barrels and head, check out other details, like the oil filter and the manly engine breather



superseded by Triumph's swinging arm frame, the sprung hub was an improvement over a rigid rear end in some situations and appeared on the Lyons race machine. Front suspension was provided by more conventional telescopic forks and the brakes were eight-inch drums front and rear. The pencil-thin twin weighed just 310lb, much less than a plunger-framed Manx Norton, which had a similar output.

Turner inevitably discovered the project and although unhappy he allowed it to continue on the basis that there would be no publicity over the racer's debut. The project would be quietly ended if the machine was uncompetitive or simply failed.

Lyons' first outing was at the Ulster road race in August without notable success. Undeterred, he stormed to victory at the Isle of Man the following month. Turner, in a volte-face, threw him a victory dinner and admitted the firm could support road racing in some fashion, clearly mindful of the effect of racing success on Triumph's important US export market.

Although the Triumph went on to take a third place at the 1947 Belgium Grand Prix, piloted by factory rider David Whitworth, and won the 1948 Manx Senior, this time with Don Crossley at the helm, its pushrod engine was not designed for 200-mile plus road races. This was clearly demonstrated at the Isle of Man when, during the 1948 Senior TT, six of the Triumphs recorded DNFs. Nevertheless, the machine was put into production in 1947 and called the Grand Prix to acknowledge Lyon's success. Purchasers could specify the state of engine tune (up to a monster 12.5:1 compression), gearbox ratios and petrol tank capacity. This was a true competition machine.

#### PRICE GUIDE

£10,000-plus for a replica  
£20,000-plus for the real deal

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

Genuine GP Triumphs sell for top dollar, so only buy from reputable sellers and inspect all paperwork in detail. If looking at a replica, make sure you buy one that is suitable for your intended use (racing or road?) so you don't end up with a highly-tuned track-master that's not suitable for Sunday spins. Or vice versa...

#### ALSO CONSIDER

Triumph Tiger 100 (lower prices, just as desirable, easier to live with). Norton Manx or International (similar thrills, half the cylinders, twice the complexity). BSA Gold Star (decent choice available in varied states of tune)

#### SPECIALIST INFO

[aceclassics.co.uk](http://aceclassics.co.uk)

#### OWNERS' CLUB

Triumph Owners MCC:  
[tomcc.org](http://tomcc.org)



**BUY IT NOW**

The feature bike was available at Pembrokeshire Classics when we went to press, complete with scrutineers' sticker from last year's Goodwood Revival, all its provenance and even a V5C. £12,500. See [pembrokeshireclassics.com](http://pembrokeshireclassics.com)

Fewer than 200 were manufactured before it was discontinued in 1950. Lyons, by contrast, went on to have a long life and died in 2014 only 26 days short of his centenary.

Unsurprisingly, given the limited production run and the nature of road racing, not many GPs have survived intact. Those that do still exist are much sought-after with a consequent impact on value. Back in 2009 Bonhams sold an example for £17,250, while H&H sold another two years later for £15,400. So if you're looking for a genuine Grand Prix Triumph – assuming you can even find one – then it's reasonable to expect to pay close to £20,000. However there is an alternative in the shape of a replica, like the one seen here.





■ **Above:** Ready... Steady... plenty of Go available here

■ **Below:** The roadster-based front brake is a simple s/s 7-inch device, but works well enough – certainly for road speeds

This replica was built by Andrew French, a noted road racer in the 1960s. The bike was created with the specific objective of campaigning at the Goodwood Revival and has a well-documented provenance. It's based on an engine that was

delivered to Rennos Ltd, Islington, in November 1947 and a frame delivered to GL Boudin & Son in St Helier, Jersey in June 1950. This has been documented by the machine registrar at the Triumph Owners' Club. Perhaps most importantly, it is believed that the cylinder heads and barrels are NOS parts and this clearly adds a considerable cachet to the replica.

There's also a sheaf of paperwork from Ace Classics that details the engine work, including shaping the bottom of the barrels for use with racing conrods, opening the crankcase to suit larger racing cams, lightening and polishing the rocker arms, dynamic balancing the crankshaft and rods, re-working the stock valve guides to suit the head refit and cutting seats, together with a rebore to plus-20. Among the array of expensive components crammed into the engine are a pair of 9:1 compression pistons, main bearings, rockerbox covers, pushrod tubes, Harman and Collins 7120 cams, together with a pair of Thunder Engineering conrods. Just over £3000 was spent with Ace Classics alone.


As the photos show, it's not only the engine that received a lot of time, attention and cash. From the exposed primary drive to the sprung rear hub, from the megaphone silencer to the pad on the tank, this machine seems to ooze originality. Not a lot of imagination is required to see Ernie Lyons powering around the Isle of Man on a machine just like this.

Looks can be deceiving, but this replica sounds as good as it looks. The rich exhaust note resounded around the fields as it set off down the road on an impromptu excursion – perhaps a little exuberant for a road-going classic. It would seem ideal for Goodwood or Brooklands, where T100 pistons might make it a bit more manageable for parade laps, or historic racing, where the engine could be let loose to its full GP potential. Either way it'll attract plenty of admiration in the paddock, as it looks fast just standing still. **CBG**





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# The striding Strada

*Morini's Strada was originally designated the GT. This particular 350 is going on a very grand tour indeed...*

PHOTOS BY JOE DICK

▲ **Above:** For their anniversary, the Morini club decided to resurrect and ride a Morini. Great idea. More clubs should do things like that

**NEXT TIME YOU** clap your eyes on a 350 Morini it might be this one. This very bike is circumnavigating the UK right now as part of the celebrations for the Morini Riders' Club 40th anniversary. It's already been to the club's trackday at Cadwell, will ferry cross the murky to the Isle of Man and is scheduled to pop up in Scotland thereafter. Forty Morini club members are riding a minimum of 40 miles on this epic adventure – and with some longer stints expected as well, the V-twin will travel 2000 miles and more before the anniversary year is out. So it needed to be in fine fettle at the outset and club stalwart Paul Compton wielded the spanners to make sure it would stand up to the stress.

The Strada is a UK machine that was donated to the club. It was registered in 1977 but still sports the wire wheels and drum brakes of the previous model. A front disc brake arrived in 1976 and cast wheels in 1977, but customers could opt for earlier

components while stocks lasted. This bike was in pretty good nick even before Paul got to grips with it. "Quite a bit of care and money had been lavished on it in the past," he explains. "Akront flangeless alloy rims replace the chrome steel originals and there's a stainless exhaust, wheel spindles and spacers, etc. The custom paint job is now quite crazed, but still looks quite attractive."

Even starting with a solid basis, Paul found himself plenty to do. "I pretty much worked from front to back. New sealed wheel bearings were fitted and the brake backplates were stripped and cleaned. The brake cam spindles hadn't benefited from much lubrication and were quite sticky, although with little wear. The backplates are bronze bushed, but there are no grease nipples and I built them up with a smear of waterproof grease. The forks were stripped and thoroughly cleaned before re-assembly. Moisture from the atmosphere will turn your fork





1. The justly famous 'wee wee' powerplant. Clever design, always amusing to ride

2. It is what it says it is; a three and one half!

3. Despite the bike still wearing its two-piece metal inlet manifolds, the rectangular slides in the Dell'Orto VHBS weren't badly worn. Later bikes used a rubber inlet manifold and many earlier bikes will have been fitted with a conversion kit

4. Morini used a generous 530 chain, but by converting to a later front sprocket from a Kangaroo or Dart, Paul fitted a 520 item, which gives room to safely use an O-ring chain

5. The hollow clevis pins on the front brake were rattling loose, so Paul made up new solid replacements

oil to sludge over time and I've even seen corroded fork internals, so it should be changed from time to time. The steering head bearings showed no notchiness, so were just cleaned and re-assembled with waterproof grease.

"The carburettors were stripped and ultrasonically cleaned before being fitted with new seal and gasket kits. The rear hub and sprocket carrier also received new bearings, and new chain and sprockets converted to use a 520 O-ring chain. Rear sprockets aren't available off the shelf in 520 and sprocket blanks are cheaper anyway, so I bored one out and drilled the bolt pattern. Sprockets Unlimited supplied the blank and chain, with the front sprocket coming from NLM."

Although the fuel in the petrol tank dated from 2009, the 350 fired up OK and Paul could inspect the engine. "The front rocker assembly was worn but not excessively, so I adjusted the valve clearances before moving on to the rear. Here condensation had caused some corrosion damage, so I removed the rockers for cleaning. Morini V-twins use a short, untensioned toothed belt to drive the cam nestled in between the cylinders. Its recommended service interval is 15,000km but they've been known to go on a lot longer. Breakage needn't be a disaster, just requires a new belt, so I like to run an engine that's been stood before replacing the belt in order to clean up the pulleys. Even on the old fuel, the bike fired up second kick and I spent some time adjusting idle stops and throttle cable synchronisation.

"The longest job was sorting out the electrics

#### PRICE GUIDE

£2000 to £6000

Later models most affordable

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

Benefit from regular oil changes (10W40 semi-synthetic for later bikes) and cambelt maintenance, and prefer high octane super-unleaded. Poor starting, running or charging can be due to alternator rotor magnets (get them re-charged by NLM). Starter motor glitches usually down to weak batteries; try a Hawker Odyssey. Do some research before buying new tyres as modern profiles mean original sizes may no longer be best. Disc braking can be improved by using smaller master cylinders

#### SPECIALIST INFO

morini-mania.co.uk

NLM:

northleicestermotorcycles.com

#### OWNERS' CLUB

Morini Riders' Club:  
morini-riders-club.com



as it had originally been laid up due to electrical problems. Morini used a modular wiring loom to make assembling the bike easier, but that means there are rather a lot of connectors. They were also unusual in the charging and ignition systems. Rather than dumping excess energy from the alternator as heat, it instead turns the rectifiers on and off and will also not charge a flat battery, assuming anything below 10V must have a failed cell. This has caused many owners to think the regulator is faulty. The Morini capacitive discharge ignition runs directly off a high voltage coil on the alternator and grounding this coil cuts the engine. A fault in the ignition switch or wiring can put battery voltage on the grounding wire and this will destroy the two CDI boxes.

"That's what had happened on this bike, along





▲ **Above:** Thanks to Paul Compton and the Morini Riders' Club for their help with this feature. To see stacks of technical videos on Morini maintenance, check out Paul's YouTube channel: [youtube.com/user/EVguru/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/EVguru/videos)

with some overheated wiring. Much of the protecting sleeving had become hard, brittle and cracked, and had to be replaced. Morini incorporated a protection diode to the ignition circuit on later bikes and I added one as well as making some other mods to prepare the bike for the club ride, like fitting a halogen headlamp and replacing the 'Snuffbox' lighting switch. These early switches are not unreliable, but quite poor ergonomically. This one still functioned but was mechanically faulty and has no provision for indicators. I replaced it with a very cheap Chinese switch, which although actually quite

nicely made, had rather small contacts and wires. Fitting some compact relays salvaged from a Ford Mondeo overcame this, boosting headlamp and horn performance above original into the bargain."

Job done, Paul took the Morini on regular shakedown rides. It suffered just one mishap when the engine dropped onto one cylinder and then died. "It fired up again readily enough and I limped home on just the front cylinder. That's a 60mph 'limp' and it would have done more! At home I found a spark on the rear cylinder, but lots of rusty looking water in the float bowl. There was an equal amount in the front carb's float bowl, so that didn't seem to be the cause. With the plug out, the rear cylinder would blow air, but a compression test read zero. With the rear rocker box removed the cause was clear. The studs holding the valve gear on are M7 for most of their length, but with an M8 thread in the head. People do sometimes overtighten them and pull the threads.

"Normally I'll feel a stud pulling, or it will come out with the nyloc retaining nut. The nuts had been re-used many times so a stud didn't come out. If a stud pulls up far enough, the M8 diameter section bottoms out on the rocker pillar and you can properly torque the nut even though the thread is stripped. One rocker stud had given way and the movement caused the other three studs to back off until there was enough clearance for the pushrods to jump off the rockers. Other than the stripped thread, no significant damage was done and a thread insert in the head fixed it."

The job was, as they say, a good 'un and right now the Morini is on the road. Check the forum on the club's site for photos of its progress around the country. And wish the MRC 'happy birthday' should you see it speeding past... **CBC**



## MOTO MORINI 3 1/2

### Caratteristiche tecniche

- Motore bicilindrico a quattro tempi a V.
- Cilindrata unitaria 172 cc.
- Cilindrata totale 344,160 cc.
- HP DIN 36, HP SAE 38,5
- Coppia max 3,28 DIN, 3,6 SAE
- Regime di coppia max 5500 giri

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- Generatore di corrente a volano magnetico alternatore di 100 Watt 12 Volt con regolatore elettronico a ricarica totale
- Accensione elettronica a scarica capacitiva
- Moduli a lamina, anello con fiamma centrale di mm. 200 x 30 a doppia camera, pastiglie di mm. 160 x 30 e penna stabilizzante
- Peso a secco Kg. 144
- Consumo litri 4,1 x 100 Km. (norme CUNA)
- Velocità max calcolata alla massima potenza: 1° Km/h 49, 2° Km/h 80, 3° Km/h 107, 4° Km/h 130, 5° Km/h 150 e 6° Km/h 165

**MANUFACTURED:** 1971 to 1985 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled four-stroke OHV V-twin **BORE / STROKE:** 62mm x 57mm **CAPACITY:** 344cc **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 11:1 **POWER:** 39bhp @ 8500rpm **TORQUE:** 25ft/lb @ 6300rpm **CARBURETTORS:** 2x Dell'Orto 25mm **IGNITION:** Electronic **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed gearbox **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, dual adjustable shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 200mm drum **REAR BRAKE:** 180mm SLS drum **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 18 **REAR TYRE:** 4.10 x 18 **WEIGHT:** 156kg dry



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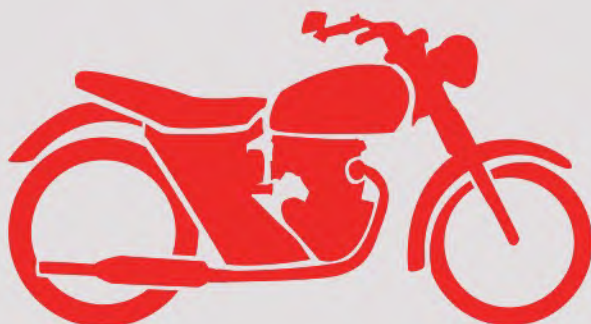
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# Real, not retro

*The current V-twin Ducati Scrambler turns heads all right. But there's a genuinely classic alternative with half the cylinders and twice the street cred. If you can start it...*

WORDS & PHOTOS BY FRANK MELLING

■ **Above:** Using the air filter as a styling feature is just one example of Ducati's unique approach

**THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING** the Ducati 450 Scrambler of the 1970s is to appreciate just how big motocross was at the time. Forty years ago road riders and circuit racing fans were heavily involved in the motocross scene and knew the factories and bikes as well, as they could recite the exploits of the legendary road racers like Mike Hailwood and Giacomo Agostini.

Top-line motocross attracted huge audiences. As many as 25,000 spectators would attend a European grand prix and in the old eastern bloc countries the battles between BSA-riding John Banks, Suzuki star Roger de Coster and CZ's Paul Friedrichs would see a quarter of a million ardent fans. At the same time, the dirt bike market in America exploded. From being a real minority sport, with a very few thousand participants concentrated mainly on the West Coast, everyone from Florida to Washington wanted a dirt bike. Dirt bikes were cool. Dirt bikes were fun. Dirt

bikes were cheeky and laughed at authority. Dirt bikes got you the pretty girl...

As usual, Ducati were in one of their traditional parlous states of near bankruptcy and looked to the burgeoning scrambler market in Europe and America as a real life-saver. They had a very credible offering on the books, not so much for serious competition but rather for the odd foray along a fire road – and a lot of posing outside the burger stall.

Ducati offered three versions of their scrambler, all of which were extremely similar except for the capacity of their engines. The 450 was the best of all three sizes and produced a very reasonable 27hp. Even today this is ample power for sporting riding and, with a bit of forethought, even the occasional girl-impressing wheelie.

The heart of all the Ducati engines was Dr Fabio Taglioni's iconic and extremely effective desmodromic valve opening system, a variation of which is still





■ **Left:** SOHC, wet-sump and a five-speed gearbox. Not exactly like a BSA B50, but a good try

■ **Above:** Dinky Smiths clocks will be familiar to riders of oily-frame Triumph and BSA singles of the period. They're unlikely to leak much oil though

■ **Below:** The lower lever is a decompressor, a crucial fitting for anyone who wants to start the machine. Backfires and bruised legs amuse spectators but fail to impress the frail

■ **Right:** Air filtration was plainly an engineering priority at Ducati. An electric foot may have been more useful



found on Ducati engines even today. At a time when European motorcycle engines were notoriously fragile, the 450 Ducatis would run up to 7000rpm without any problem. Their five-speed gearboxes also marked them out as state of the art. Using the word 'art' is always appropriate for a Taglioni engine. The heavily finned 450 was one of the most beautiful motors of its generation and is still a thing of sublime beauty today.

Taglioni was a fine engineer but not overly bothered with trivia such as mere mortals starting one of his engines. The kick-start – Taglioni never got round to fitting an electric starter to the singles – is mounted high on the left-hand side of the engine and this location is just about as bad as it gets. Like all sporting singles, the 450 kicks back like an angry mule if the rider gets the starting procedure wrong, so real thought was required to get the fires lit in the all-alloy motor.

To persuade a 450 into life you must first manually flood the Dell'Orto carburettor – but not a fraction too much fuel or the engine won't start at all and you will have to change the spark plug. Clearly, like all riders of the time you will have a plug spanner and a couple of spare plugs immediately to hand.

With the mixture enriched to perfection – if you're very lucky or extremely skilled – the piston needs to be brought to top dead centre on the ignition stroke. Again, being brought up on singles you will know precisely where to find this sweet spot. Then pull in the decompressor lever, which means the piston can be just gently teased over top dead centre of its stroke. Next, allow the kick-starter to return so that its full arc is available.

#### PRICE GUIDE £5000 to £12,000

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

A street scrambler, not up to serious off-roading and will suffer if thrashed on the mud.

The real dirtbike is the RT from 1971 with a tuned motor and radically different chassis. On standard Scramblers look out for the usual Italian weak spots – electrics, chrome and paintwork all suffer. Few UK specialists. Spares supply from Italy can be less than reliable

#### ALSO CONSIDER

BSA B50 (better spares supply, just as hard to start). Honda CL450 (much less cash, vastly more user-friendly). Modern Ducati Scrambler (nothing in common apart from the badge and styling and will lose value while an old bike appreciates)

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Now, all that you need is total confidence in your carburettor enrichment and piston position – and then follow that with a long, determined swing. As the engine spins over TDC and the piston comes up to ignition, open the throttle the width of a gnat's eyelash and the engine will fire and you will beam with smug satisfaction.

Get any element of the exercise wrong and the 450 will either kick back and try to break your leg, or worse, the engine will flood and refuse to fire. Prospective purchasers of a 450 today should be reassured that retro-fitted electronic ignition has made life much easier (and safer).





**Above:** A great scrambler with street cred. Starting is best attempted in private

Once the 450 is stirred into life, the sound is evocative of all that is good about singles. The rasp and boom of the 436cc motor would wake a sporting rider from the dead and the Silentium silencer makes only a nominal bid towards reducing the noise level. Not quite a Manx Norton, but still a thing of utter aural wonder.

The 450's chassis is also very good. Ducati might have been a financial tragedy, staggering from one crisis to another, but the firm's development rider,

mechanic and racer, Franco Farne, spent a lot of time in the mountains of Marche honing the handling of the Ducati singles. Despite its off-road styling, the Scrambler has a frame with the race modifications derived from Bruno Spaggiari's factory race bikes and so it is a seriously good piece of kit.

The rest of the cycle parts are largely derived from standard Italian proprietary suppliers. This is good news and bad news. Some elements of the bike are actually excellent. The Grimeca drum brakes work very well for their period and are elegant too and the Marzocchi forks are also fine. Where things truly fall off the edge of a quality control cliff is the standard Ducati paintwork and the ancillary fittings. To describe Ducati welding, brackets and paintwork as dire is to misrepresent all three elements. They are truly dreadful. Ironically, the rare, chromed tank on the Canadian bike we rode shows that someone in Bologna could do decent quality cosmetic work.

On the road, the 450 really is a thing of delight. The motor is willing and has ample power for sporting riding and for modern traffic. It's considerably more torquey than the 250 and 350 variants and benefits from an improved frame as befits the additional bhp. Fitted with current tyres, the handling is exemplary. In fact, it's everything that a classic should be in terms of power, handling and looks. The gearbox is sweet and the clutch positive and reliable. You'd think the Scrambler was built not so very long ago.

This is a worthy consideration for anyone wanting a classic bike with strong hints of a modern machine feel. You don't necessarily need to spring for an all-new V-twin to appreciate Ducati's Scrambler style. **CBS**

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**BORE / STROKE:** 87mm x 75 mm **CAPACITY:** 436cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.3:1  
**OUTPUT:** 27bhp @ 6500rpm **LUBRICATION:** Wet sump, gear pump

**TRANSMISSION:** Five-speed gearbox, chain final drive **CLUTCH:** Wet, multi-plate **EDITOR:** Dell'Orto VHB 29AB **IGNITION:** Coil **FRAME:** Simplex open cradle tubular

**CARBURETTOR:** Dell'Orto VHB 29AB **IGNITION:** Coil **FRAME:** Simplex open cradle tubular  
**FRONT SUSPENSION:** Hydraulic telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin  
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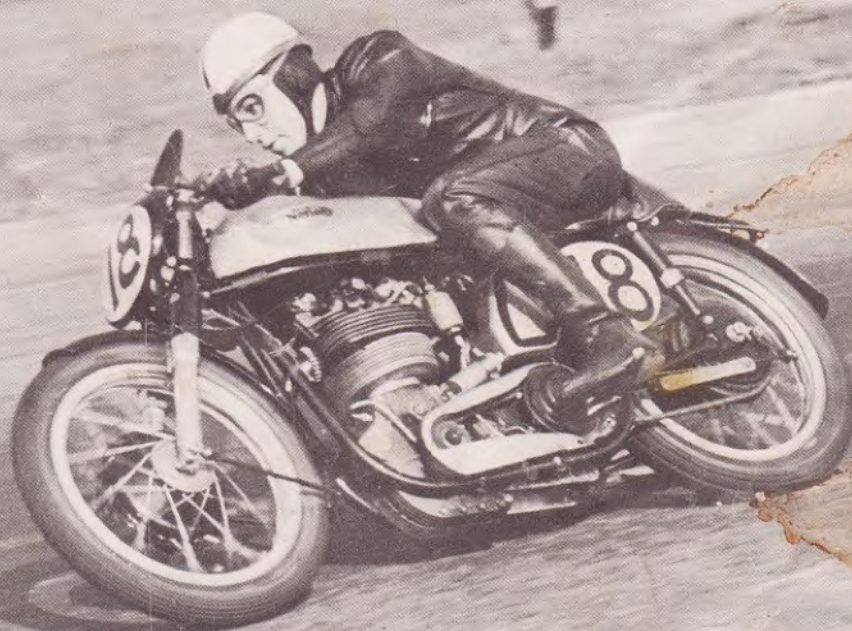
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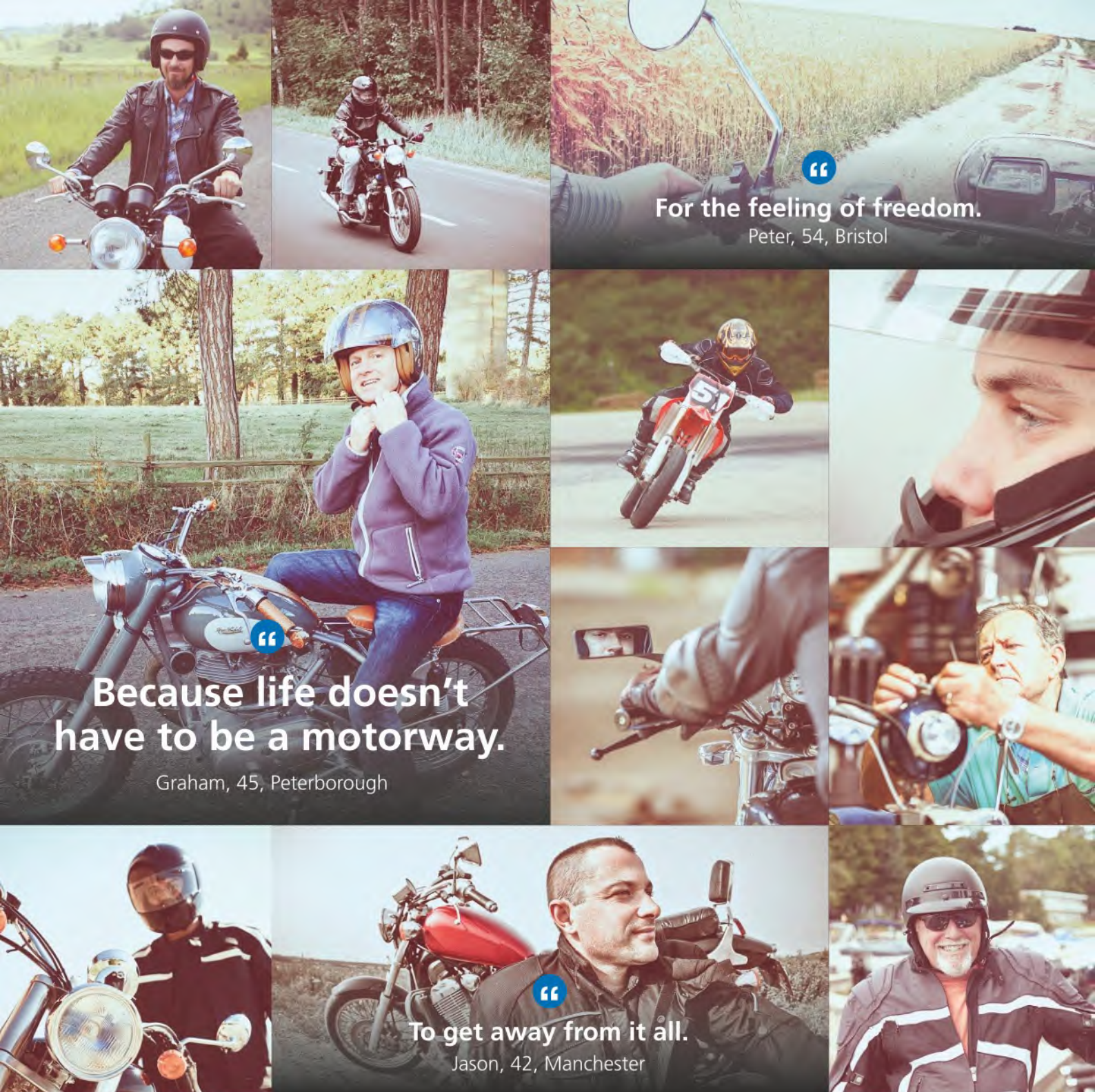
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# What is original?

**WE ARE CURRENTLY** living in a time when old is new. From fashion to interior design and not least motorbikes, retro is trendy and the way to go. A previous CBG editor focussed a lot on the new modern way to turn an old motorcycle into the latest hipster fashion accessory. My question to George Cohen would be: is this so wrong? I can see both sides of the argument.

To George, 'original' is as it came out of the factory, even down to the faded 60-year-old paint, and many share his view. In the auction game unrestored bikes often sell for more money than a heavily restored model of the same sort. Now go back a good few years and you could pick up almost any old British bike or other classic for next to nothing. They were not only unfashionable but deemed to be mechanically unsound and not worthy of keeping. At that point it was only people like George keeping them alive.

Let's be honest, the bikes of yesteryear were only ever as good as the technology of the day allowed. They were often hard to start, awkward to ride and hard to keep going. Today, with our present capabilities, why not make alterations to these old machines to make them easier to live with or better serve a purpose? Everything evolves and in another 50 years the bikes of now with switchable riding modes, ABS, traction control, etc, will no doubt be thought of as primitive old relics.

On one hand, I salute those who keep everything just as it was. They are running mobile museum pieces that will pass down in history for future generations to see exactly how it was. But for the current generation that just wants a bike that they enjoy and can ride as they want, then let them customise to their hearts' content.

I just love motorbikes and derive as much pleasure from looking over an unrestored classic as from admiring some of the beautifully restored or customised ones. All are keeping going a future for these wonderful machines far better than languishing in a shed rusty and forgotten.

**David Taylor**



## Original & authentic

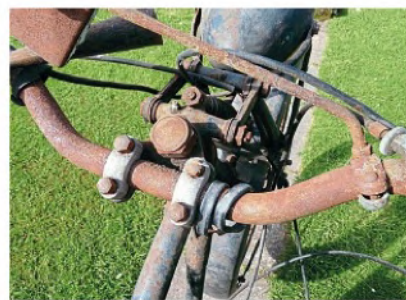
**I'M NEW(ISH) TO** British bikes but have ridden for years including commuting. I currently have two BMWs, one is 35 years old and the other is 29. I've just acquired an Excelsior Consort – as seen here. I had a quote of £85 to £115 to rechrome the handlebars – they're too far gone to clean up. I can buy new ones for £37. I am cleaning up most parts, including nuts and bolts, but have decided to buy new bars and seat springs; seat springs £5 a pair!

Good luck with mag, I'm relatively new there too.

**John, by email**

*I too once had a Consort (but not that one). I never got it to run at all. There was nothing wrong with it, it just refused to start.*

*Good luck! Frank W*



## Language

**REGARDING TERMINOLOGY,** I would like to add my tuppence worth. I really wish that the scribes would cease using terms such as 'trick' (think Tommy Cooper), 'muffler' (think winter warmer), 'fender' (think fireplace or guitar), 'gas tank' (think camping), 'shifter' (think gear lever), etc, etc. This isn't related to the idea that a bike has to be British to be a

classic. My classics include bikes from the people who brought us samurais and Panzers. It's just that the British classic terminology that we have grown up with should prevail in the pages of our classic bike magazines.

The next step could be when we 'hang out' at our local pub, the expectation will be that we drink our real ale straight from a bottle!

Great magazine.

**Karl Chadwick**

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## Readers' rides

**FIND US ON FACEBOOK** and you'll see plenty of Classic of the Day photos – including snaps of readers' bikes that we're delighted to share for all to admire. This month, thanks to Clive for showing off his retro-resto 1981 T140E. Clive retained the functional benefits of the late twins, including the 750 engine in standard tune, electronic ignition and disc brakes. But he went to town with the looks, aiming to recreate the style of a 1960s



machine. Hence the special fittings and modified components, like the custom clock mounts, 1960s tank badges and the discreet headlamp mount bracket. Says Clive: "Many modifications were made to tidy away wires and cables, or to simplify maintenance." Solid job, sir!

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# Back from the brink

**THE LINK BETWEEN** the bible and motorcycling may be somewhat tenuous. However, I am sure that my Sunday school teacher mentioned something once about Jesus entering Jerusalem on a Triumph. She claimed to have said “in triumph” but that must have been a slip of prepositions on her part as no way would a guy like that have been in a girly car. Mind you, the minister, who always gave her a ride home, had a Tiger, so that might have accounted for her error. She had a young Cub later, but it was re-badged a Terrier just to silence village gossip, if you know what I mean.

I digress, but a biblical quote describes my recent close encounter and consequent teetering at the edge of the abyss of grace. You see, I briefly left ‘the fold’ and am now looking to get back in. The quote: ‘Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.’

It went like this. For several years, I was a stoic at the shelves of WHSmith once each month. My wife thought that there was something between me and the young, gap-year cashier who always helped me with the DIY payment scanning tills. It was nothing of the sort of course. I was there with the solitary purpose in mind of buying CBG.

Now let us be honest, to design a monthly magazine about products that, by and large, have not been produced on these shores for decades is challenge enough in itself. Add to that the need to inspire enthusiasts and appeal to a broad audience, of mixed background, wide ranging age and even wider opinions, in the competitive market place of journalism is a task of some considerable enormity. The scribes of CBG who contributed to my enjoyment thus had my respect and gratitude. However...

For a period, I became jaded and disappointed. I enjoyed the contributions of the guy from America. It was all a bit of ‘New England in the Fall’ and such melancholia, but it allowed me to escape from my kitchen chair late at night without applying for a visa. Shades of Alistair Cooke. That vanished. I then lost the solid contributions of Andrew Wilson, who seemed to be a dour but always informed and interesting Scot. A second entertaining read was denied

me by some young distant boardroom cappuccino sippers. By now and in an earlier persona, Frank W’s own contributions were getting, shall we say, a little sharp, judgemental and omnipotent in tone.

But I am a loyal sort and so I stayed on.

The balance finally tipped one day, when frankly (no pun) I became embarrassed to be seen with a copy of my old friend under my arm. The trusty mag of old had become akin to something one might find sharing a waiting room table with *The Field* and *Hello*, in some private dental clinic in Mayfair. There was a clear attempt to enrichen all of our lives with retro yuppie nonsense. I left the fold.

However, this month I bought a copy of my old friend CBG. I scanned its pages first. ‘Damn,’ I thought. ‘This is better.’ I read Frank at the back. Clear, unequivocal, informed, experienced, but not in the least offensive to anyone. ‘The man is happier and in control,’ I thought. Great. I then twigged that Frank is now the editor. Louise Limb – beautiful drawings as usual and, yes, I have an M20 – not ‘the darling’ that was Vera, but there you go. The Crusader clinched it. I bought the magazine for an in-depth perusal.

What a turnaround. Please accept my sincere appreciation for the creation of a wonderfully balanced piece of entertaining and informative journalism. There is something for everyone without too much of anything. I just wish I had read the Trading Post earlier! The article on the Bike Shed, London was very interesting indeed, and while I don’t think necessarily that the trendies of disused warehouses sporting waistcoats and Prosecco have a monopoly on ideas for success in the future, they certainly have a major contribution to make. How revitalising youth can be. Stafford is great, but does it rather take us for granted. It’s nice to see that Beckers can ride a bike as well as kick a ball, but it was a privilege to share a little of the great Peter Williams’ story.

There we are. Damn good job. The sinner is back hoping for a welcome as earlier hinted by Luke!

**Dan Griffiths**

*Blushes of course. Thank you, Dan. The cheque is in the post.*  
*Frank W*



## Another sidevalve soldier

**FOLLOWING JULY’S FEATURE,** I thought you would like to see a photo of a Triumph TRW. This photo shows me as a fresh-faced 19-year-old and was taken in Schleswig-Holstein in 1978, on Exercise Bold Guard. The TRW was brought to Germany from the UK with 24 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers, based at Chatham, but I believe it was from 36 Engineer Regiment, based in Maidstone. I remember it being transported from the UK to Germany and back again in the front bucket of a light or medium wheeled tractor.

**Keith Marchant**

## Peter Williams: A hero

**I JUST WANTED** to say how much I am enjoying the July issue of CBG. There’s still more to come, but I particularly wanted to thank you all for the terrific article about the Arter G50 and Peter Williams by Alan Cathcart, not forgetting the terrific photos.

One of the good things about it was that it was long enough really to get your teeth into. Maybe we’re meant to lack the attention span for longer articles, but this showed how good they can be. But maybe really what was great about it was to read about Peter Williams. Like Mr Cathcart, I have always had the greatest respect for him as both a courageous rider and a brilliant engineer. Many thanks.



I also – as the owner of an ex-WD M20 – have to say thanks to Louise Limb for her lovely combination of RAF bike with Vera Lynn. Great, I am going to find a place for it on my wall. And I mustn’t forget the ruminations of some old bloke at the back of the magazine with his ‘famous

last words’. Good to see you still in harness, great mag. It really cheers me up in these difficult days. Thank you, everybody.

**Peter Beresford**

*The full range of Louise’s artwork, including signed prints, pin-ups and greeting cards, is available on her website [louiselimb.com](http://louiselimb.com)*



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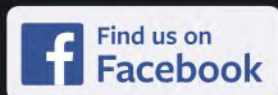
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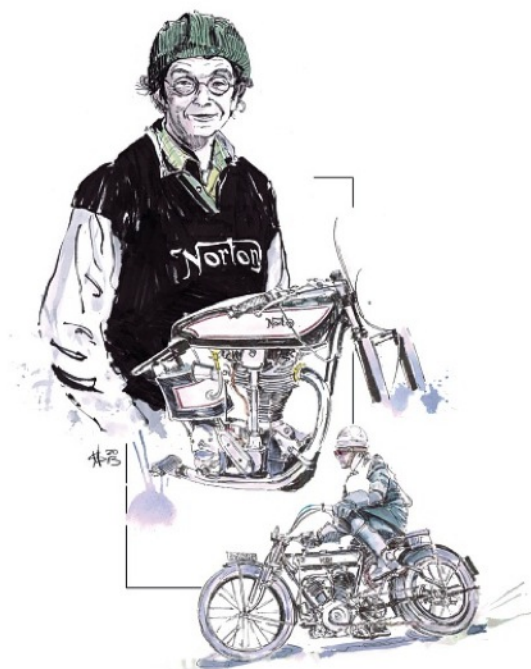


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GEORGE COHEN

## ROLLING ROAD

*A couple of weeks ago I had my first experience of riding on a rolling road. It was both noisy and very interesting...*

**I HAVE RIDDEN** motorcycles on the road, on the racetrack, on muddy lanes, on the sand and even on a frozen lake in Canada with special screws screwed into the tyres. A couple of weeks ago I had my first experience of riding on a rolling road; it was both noisy and very interesting.

So why was I doing this? Running a motor at 'Harry Flat Out' and getting absolutely nowhere? Maybe not in terms of travelling from home to the pub or home to the Isle of Man, or even from A to B; absolutely nowhere. Not at all, I was in fact getting there. Getting where? Getting the tuning spot on.

For the past 40 years I have relied on the 'road test' to establish my carburettor tuning sequence after a motor has been freshly rebuilt. Start with the slow running and idle, fiddle with a couple of screws on the side of the carb, maybe change the slide for one with a different cutaway, swap the pilot jet, raise or lower the needle, take her for a burn, do a plug chop, change the main jet, alter the length of the inlet tract, mess around with the exhaust pipe length, try a harder or softer plug, alter the octane rating of the fuel, try tighter jeans, have a another swig of Red Bull!

Take the bike out for another run and repeat the whole procedure. Then ask yourself: is she running better or worse? Is it too weak or too rich? Does the plug look the right colour? Not quite sure, so I'll fiddle a bit here. It is all a bit haphazard, don't you think? That was the way the old boys used to do it, me included. But now things have changed; we are in a high tech world and we can use the tools of the 21st century.

My good friend Paul Mac, a self-made man of wealth and wit, and with a passion for fast motorcycles, has recently installed a rolling road dynamometer into his workshop, and he invited me over to have a go. This is the procedure:

Thoroughly warm up the engine outside the 'dyno-shed' to get all the running clearances at their optimum and then wheel the motorcycle onto the road. With willing helpers positioning the rear wheel precisely over a large aluminium drum, the bike is securely strapped in place. A probe is stuffed up the exhaust pipe, as close to the exhaust valve as possible to measure the unburned hydrocarbons, which is correlated to the mixture ratio of fuel and

oxygen, and we are ready to rock and roll.

Sitting astride the machine, your eyes are focused on a large type of computer screen displaying three dials, a torque graph and numerous numbers. The most important information is shown on a fancy image that measures the mixture; when correct and at a ratio of oxygen to fuel of about 13 to 1 the motor is at its sweet spot. Any higher or lower ratios and adjustments need to be made. Information pertaining to the rear wheel speed, torque curve and BHP is also shown.

Going through a procedure of holding the throttle at just one quarter, then half and finally full on, allows you and Terry (the dyno expert man) to establish what needs to be altered to the carb settings and other factors, such as exhaust and inlet tracts, ignition timing and all the other variables related to optimum performance. In the past I used to run a Shenck electro-flux engine dynamometer in my workshop, so I should not have been that surprised by both the noise and the vibration. When I used to tune cammy Norton engines, bolted into the mounting rig and coupled to a dyno, when revving at 6,500rpm the racket was so extreme and the vibration so intense, one expected the whole show to explode into oblivion. Similarly, when on the rolling road, the whole bike feels and sounds as if it going to disintegrate. Maybe this is related to the fact that my crank balance factor is a tad out?

So we proceed with running the motor at relatively low revs at first to set the needle jet (I am using a Mikuni carb instead of the standard Amal) and when the mixture is spot on we call it day for now. I take the bike away and put on a couple of hundred miles at no more than half throttle, change the oil and return a week later to play with the main jet.

The result? An almost perfect set up; the mid-range still feels a bit 'chucky', despite the computer telling us that it is running a tad weak. Are we going round in circles? Is the new procedure better than the old?

I let my instincts tell me to lower the needle by one notch (to weaken the mixture) and now have a sweet running machine, with a smooth and perfect throttle response and even a tickover. So my 'Low-Boy' single overhead cam Manx Norton is now ready for both the Goodwood Festival of Speed and the Classic TT. Thank you Rolling Road boys. **CBG**

***'When on the rolling road, the whole bike feels and sounds as if it is going to disintegrate. Maybe my crank balance factor is a tad out?'***

### WHO IS GEORGE COHEN?

Dr George Cohen, MBBS MSc MRCPsych BA Eng, holds surgery in The Somerset Shed and specializes in Norton singles. He's also a VMCC Norton Specialist, Bonhams Motoring Consultant, 'Doctor of Reason' and 'Soldier of Fortune'





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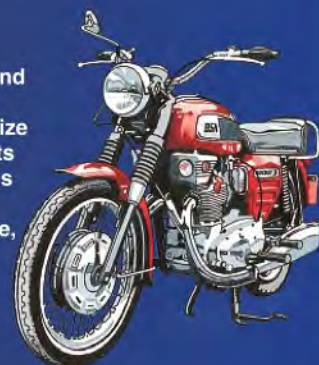
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AUL D'ORLEANS

## THE RISE OF THE ZOMBIES

*We walk atop the decomposing remains of thousands of dead bike brands, piling up in great waves since the 1890s, when motorcycle manufacture commenced*

**IN THE WORLD** of business, an established brand name carries emotional resonance, which equals cash value. It can take years to build up a good reputation, so as a shortcut, today's aspiring manufacturers looking for instant market recognition shop for business names in the motorcycle cemetery. Copyright lawyers stroll among the crypts of dead motorcycle companies we buried decades ago, looking for names not wholly forgotten. They don't want the bones or DNA, they're just paying off relations so the family names can be legally chiselled from their tombs. Once they're secured, these old names are pasted onto a wholly unrelated new motorcycle, which bears not the slightest family resemblance, because they're not family at all, but zombies and clones.

We walk atop the decomposing remains of thousands of dead bike brands, piling up in great waves since the 1890s, when motorcycle manufacture commenced. Most of these names are too long gone for a spark of recognition, but there are potent names alive in motorcycle folklore that are bound to rise again. Vincent, Cyclone, Rudge and others are currently lying dormant, awaiting an injection of hubris and cash to bring them back to life... and mark my words, they will be back, even if they aren't undead for long. Cyclone was perhaps the original zombie, suffering many attempts at resurrection from 1916 onwards, and no wonder; with its OHC v-twin motor it was the most technically advanced motorcycle built in America for 70 years, until H-D allied with Porsche to build the V-Rod. A series of new owners gave Cyclone CPR (Cash Promoting Resuscitation), but it never got off the operating table. We'll certainly see Cyclone again, as zombies just keep coming back.

Similar tales of woe have befallen Vincent and Crocker, two power-packed names with solid gold history. Both have seen legally contentious revivals, briefly, and press releases herald the return of the dead like Quasimodo ringing the bells of Notre Dame. Crocker's corpse is yanked to and fro in a cross-global tug-of-war between LA and Sydney, as the name-holder can't afford to build new ones, and the one who can afford to build them hates the name-holder. So it is with graveyard scenes; family feuds get pretty ugly. Before all that drama, the corpse of Indian had been shocked and stuffed and briefly reanimated repeatedly, and holds the record for the number of times a dead brand has arisen, blinked its eyes briefly, and laid down again. Polaris has

enough money to keep Indian alive though, surely? Motorcycling is expensive business.

Worse, though, is grabbing a name by force and rumours are currently swirling around Vincent in that regard. I made an April Fool's joke two years ago about the same Indian brand that yanked 'Royal' from its English owner might just decide he doesn't deserve Vincent, either. Vincent from India? Geography doesn't stop people buying Jaguars. Harley-Davidson and BMW already have factories in India, but they're living brands and can make such choices organically. There's a shock when a long-gone company reappears on another continent, as if rumours of their demise were greatly exaggerated, as Mark Twain famously quipped. Perhaps they've merely been on holiday and are now ready for work, tanned and invigorated.

Zombie brands are different than clones, which are reproductions of obsolete motorcycles. Clones have been with us since the 1980s, originating in vintage racing circles as the need for replacement parts spurred manufacture,

which eventually grew into new motorcycle construction. Thus one can buy a brand new Norton Manx, Matchless G50, or Brough SS100 and plenty of precious racing machines have been duplicated in limited numbers, like Honda six-cylinders and Moto Guzzi V8s. Clones are generally harmless, unless they're passed off as originals, in which case it's a simple matter of fraud, and that happens too. But a zombie is a defunct brand revived in name only by an unrelated business. Zombie brands have zero DNA from the original company, and often feature a notional 'update' of a classic machine, modernised for a living audience.

Not many zombies stay upright for long, though, because manufacturing motorcycles is fiercely expensive, requiring years of R&D, and enough money to weather a few years' indifference in the market. Most zombies are extremely limited production, or outright showpieces, brought to life to shine glory on another enterprise entirely. This can seem, to those faithful to the old marque, to be fantastically cynical efforts to leverage a good name to sell T-shirts, or whole clothing lines. When aging supermodels are draped across a stupendously ugly motorbike wearing logo clothing, it's clear what's the real business at hand. As much as we might throw up our hands in horror at zombies, they can't change the past, for better or worse. **CBG**

*'When aging supermodels are draped across a stupendously ugly motorbike wearing logo clothing, it's clear what's the real business at hand...'*

### WHO IS PAUL D'ORLEANS?

Paul d'Orleans is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He's best known as 'The Vintagent' for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d'Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and 'Tintype' photographs, and is curating an exhibit on cafe racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.



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**ONCE AGAIN** I find I've broken a promise, although for once this was one I made to myself rather than an editor sternly issuing a deadline or a lover requiring a spurious commitment in return for some urgent, spur-of-the-moment hanky-panky: I've acquired a water-cooled motorbike.

Of course the enduring appeal of auld motorbikes is largely based on their inherent simplicity. A limited number of cylinders, moving parts and bodywork was and remains good reason to own an ancient machine, although of course that started to change when the Japanese came along with their infernal four and three cylinder contraptions with multiple overhead camshafts and integral gearboxes, although they at least had the wit to produce single and twin-potters that those of us weaned on oily old Brit bikes could identify with and admire for their inherent lack of oiliness. And thus it was that I abandoned my Beezers and Trumpets and DOTs and Greeveses in favour of a succession of Yamaha and Suzuki singles and twins in the 70s. But of course I drew the line at liquid cooling when it first appeared in 1973 wrapped around Suzuki's GT750 triple, the humorously nicknamed 'Kettle'.

'More stuff to go wrong' was the watchword here, for the idea that a technologically complex solution to a problem that hadn't heretofore really existed, and one that also added weight to a type of vehicle whose fundamental virtue was its lack of, seemed anathema to me. Indeed for at least the first of these reasons I also avoided anything turbocharged, whether on two or four wheels, until the early noughties when I was finally persuaded that the diesel-engined car I needed to tow a trailer full of trailbikes was better off blown.

And so my dalliance with what we now call classics has remained firmly with the air-cooled variety, although the odd oil-cooler has crept into the picture here and there, most notably with a Kawasaki GPz 500S (which many wouldn't regard as a classic, but its day will come) and my current Honda CBX 750F (which many would, and it has).

But I now own another Honda, a VT500 Ascot, which kind of slunk under my liquid-snubbing radar and for all the wrong reasons. Firstly, it is the first really old motorbike I've bought for almost exclusively aesthetic reasons. As my reader may recall, I am slowly – and to my shame very slowly – fashioning a street-scrambler out of a knackered CB400N SuperDream, inspired as much as anything by the Ascot that already looks like one, albeit with a strong element of flat-tracker which its American market, and consequently Honda's racing efforts, inspired if not required.

But whilst the Americas got their svelte, butch, purposeful-looking Ascot, what we got was the VT500E, a roadster of somewhat weird



**MARK WILLIAMS**

## A LIQUIDITY PROBLEM

*The enduring appeal of auld motorbikes is largely based on their inherent simplicity*

appearance beloved of dispatch riders for its maintenance-shrugging shaft-drive, self-adjusting camchain and frugality, although the fully enclosed front disc brake affected by Honda across many of their middleweights at the time was roundly and rightly disdained. But like that other half-litre workhorse, the CX500, the VT500E and of course its rarer Ascot sibling were liquid-cooled.

And thus the highly original and near minter that I bought and had shipped over from the colonies via the good offices of import specialists DK Motorcycles (who have stacks of interesting imports at [www.dkmotorcycles.com](http://www.dkmotorcycles.com)) requires a 50/50 mixture of glycol and H<sub>2</sub>O to keep its cool. In practical and physical terms this is effected by a relatively unobtrusive radiator running forward of the front downtubes, with a thermostatically controlled fan situated behind it, a reservoir nestling remotely adjacent to the off-side rear subframe, a temperature gauge stuck in the dashboard and miscellaneous switchgear located hither and yon. All very dandy, but it adds weight: the Ascot is actually three kilograms lighter than the VT500E at 177kg, but still 10kg, lardier than a Morini 500 Maestro, which admittedly abjures the benefit of shaft drive. And what's more, it doesn't work.

Once charged with a few litres of fuel, the Ascot soon if not erratically fired up after its long journey across the high seas and eventually settled down to a satisfying thrum, which willingly turned into an

endearing snarl with a quick twist of the wrist. But after four or five minutes I noticed the temperature gauge needling into the red-zone with no sign of the fan cutting in, and as the bike has yet to scale the obstacles that the DfT has erected before it can be registered for use on the Queen's Highway, and I am of course a law abiding citizen, I couldn't take it for a blast down the lanes to see if (a) it shakes up the system and activates the fan, (b) mere airflow cools things down, or worst of all (c), it seizes.

At least the vendor, who struck me during our verbal and email negotiations as a thoroughly decent bloke – he does after all also own a Matchless G85 and a Seeley G50 replica – provided a pukka Honda workshop manual with the bike, which promises hours of fun scouring the many pages dedicated to the cooling system and then applying spanners, thermometers and multi-meters accordingly.

But it does rather look like my reservations about liquid-cooling were well-founded. And I'm already regretting selling the pick-up that I owned back in the late 70s, which was admirably suited to conveying broken-down motorbikes back to the homestead. It was a 1967 VW crew-cab transporter... powered of course by a 1600cc air-cooled engine. **CBG**

*'After four or five minutes I noticed the temperature gauge needling into the red-zone with no sign of the fan cutting in...'*

### WHO IS MARK WILLIAMS?

Williams is a serial motorbicycle magazine junkie, having published, launched and edited *Bike*, *Which Bike?* and *Motorcycle International* amongst others. Which means he's tested, ridden and even owned more bikes than is probably good for him



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# TROPHY LIFE

*Built in Britain and rebuilt in America, Triumph's Trophy always made friends wherever it appeared...*

WORD AND IMAGES BY BOB CLARKE

It's something of a cliché for men of a certain age to muse whimsically about the bikes they owned when they were a lad, how they'd bought them for less than the price of a Burton's suit and how they wished they'd kept hold of them now that their value is on par with a Fabergé egg.

Back in the very early Seventies when I was young and slim, when fashion sense was dictated by trouser width and you could still buy a new 500cc Triumph motorcycle for less than £500, I paid £40 for a 1951 Trophy TR5, just like the one in the photos.

Well, not quite just like the one in the photos, as it came with a fat 16-inch rear wheel, six-inch extended fork legs, a pretty reasonable brush-painted attempt at a Captain America 'Easy Rider' stars and stripes paintjob on the minuscule Wassell trials tank and a pair of exhaust pipes that, being all of 10 inches long, produced great tongues of blue flame that did their best to burn right through the toe caps of my Doc Martens all the way home.

It also wobbled... a lot. It was a defect in handling that wasn't down to the fat back wheel, the extended forks or the fact that my feet were being barbecued by the roaring flames from the exhaust pipes. After the tiny Wassell tank was removed it transpired the previous owner had removed the bit of the frame that ran from the nose of the seat to just below the headstock and the actual top tube of the frame had snapped in two, leaving just the aforementioned Wassell tank holding the motorcycle together.

If I'd known then what I know now, I'd have cosseted it away for 30-odd years, rebuilt it back to stock spec and sold it for more money than I could have possibly dreamed of in 1971. Obviously, I didn't. What I actually did was get some bloke with a dodgy stick welder to weld a solid steel bar inside the top tube of the frame, stuck a 650 T120 engine in it and rode it like a lunatic until the frame broke again. Then I chucked it away, keeping just the engine, gearbox, sprung hub back wheel and the front-end, which I relocated into a sturdier rigid 650 Thunderbird frame (the one with the 'hole' in the seat tube for the SU carb) of approximately the same vintage, that came complete with the original ►



## TRIUMPH TROPHY TR5



### ABOVE:

Although all-alloy engines have a rep for ringing their fins, Triumph's close-pitch design is remarkably quiet in use. Detailing is superb. The oil pressure tell-tale has been removed, and the rocker feed taken from the outlet more commonly used for a gauge

It wouldn't be a 1950s Triumph without a tank rack, so they say

### MAIN:

Edward Turner understood that style sells and he made Triumph into one of the most stylish ranges of all time

petrol tank, seat and rear mudguard, which I also chucked away.

Obviously, someone kept more of the 1951 Trophy seen here than I did, because when George Vincensi bought this TR5 at Jerry Woods auction in Deland in 2004 it was almost complete, but wearing the wrong exhaust system. Part of the Dick Brown collection, the Trophy was one of the bikes in the auction that hadn't been rebuilt by the famous American Triumph restorer and came with a few additional original parts, such as the engine guard and air filter, which George has, but hasn't fitted on the bike yet.

Well-known in the USA as an engine tuner, mostly with Ducatis and a contemporary of Ducatista Reno Leoni in the early days of AMA Superbike racing, George built the Ducati V-twin Richard Schlachter rode to first place in the Superbike race at Loudon, New Hampshire, in 1979, a race that also highlighted the potential of another Ducati rider, a 17-year-old

kid called Freddie Spencer who finished fourth. While the Italian bikes from Bologna are George's forte, he will also happily turn his hand to making any motorcycle go faster, including factory Yamahas and the Honda RC30 ridden by five-times AMA Champion Mike Baldwin in the 1988 Daytona 200.

George also worked for Berliner, the USA distributor for Ducati, Moto-Guzzi, BMW and Zundapp, for many years and owned his own motorcycle dealership. George raced in the 1960s, making a name for himself aboard Ducati singles, and during the Seventies he ran his own race team and also managed one of the teams in the Anglo-American race series that pitted the top American road racers against the best of the Brits.

After retiring from full-time tuning, George took up vintage racing with the newly-formed AHRMA (American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association) in the late Eighties, on a Ducati naturally, and he likes to restore bikes like the ones he had, and wishes he had, as a kid. Such as this 1951 TR5.

George completely rebuilt it and did all of the work himself, apart from chroming and pinstriping the wheels. The work took almost a year, although as George says, much of the time was spent waiting for parts and finding an original 20-inch front wheel rim

*The work took almost a year, although as George says, much of the time was spent waiting for parts to arrive...*





and the correct period tyres that came via the AJ's & Matchless Owner's Club in the UK.

A true perfectionist, George had the chroming carried out by America's top car restoration company, the flawless finish on the TR5's petrol tank achieved by filling the pits and small imperfections with solder and polishing it to perfection before copper, nickel and finally chrome plating. It was not cheap and the high cost means that George is their only bike customer, but the results speak for themselves. Other parts were gleaned at swapmeets, including the genuine Triumph tyre pump mounted on the chainguard, for which George has been offered \$400 by another collector.

While George 'found' this particular TR5 at an auction, most of the bikes he restores are trade-ins he stashed away when he had his motorcycle shop, and despite continually being asked to carry out restorations for other people, George only wants to work on his own bikes, mostly Italian and pre-unit Brits. And while he freely admits that neither are the best nor the most reliable bikes in the world, George also says that he likes to work on bikes that are 'mechanically interesting'. I called my old pre-unit Triumph TR5 many things myself – usually when kicking away for half an hour with an oil-filled magneto – but never 'mechanically interesting'. ♦

#### ABOVE:

Wide bars, with few rider distractions. The riding experience – we find – is often improved by fitting as many factory-spec parts as possible. Triumph had their own views on many subjects, including handlebar rubbers and twistgrips. Finding the best parts of all part of the builder's delight, apparently

The sprung hub is often criticised, but works well – within its limits – when properly set up. And yes, the decal on the toolbox is actually from a rather later version of the Trophy, but suits this one well

#### LEFT:

Like a lot of off-road machines, the Trophy is a great machine to flick around on tarmac. Light, precise and with excellent geometry



## TRIUMPH TROPHY TR5



### ABOVE:

Although built entirely for rough riding, the TR5 is remarkably delicate in its detailing

**PART OF EDWARD** Turner's genius was that he gave the customers what they wanted. When the owner of Ariel Motorcycles, Jack Sangster, bought Triumph in 1936, he moved Turner from Ariel, where he'd designed the OHC 500cc Square Four and gave him the job of head designer. He also put the autocratic Turner in charge as General Manager with the task of revitalising the Triumph brand.

The popular bike in the 1930s was the 'sporting single' and Triumph was already making them, albeit with a less than sporting persona. Triumph's existing range of overhead valve 250, 350 and 500cc singles were fast and reliable, but lacklustre enough to be lost among the similar offerings from Ariel, BSA, Norton, etc.

Turner already had plans to scrap Val Page's 650 twin-cylinder Triumph and replace it with his own 500cc Speed Twin, but he revamped the existing three OHV single cylinder models with a large helping of chrome plating on the fuel tanks and headlamps, new silver and blue paintwork and race-style high level exhaust systems, but his pièce de résistance was to rename them Tiger 70, 80 and 90 and the public lapped them up

Launched just before the Second World War, Triumph's 500cc Speed Twin and more sporting Tiger 100 really came into their own as the future of British motorcycling in the immediate post war era. But despite Turner's compact and powerful twins making most of the existing singles just so much old hat, in off-road competition the slow slog of the

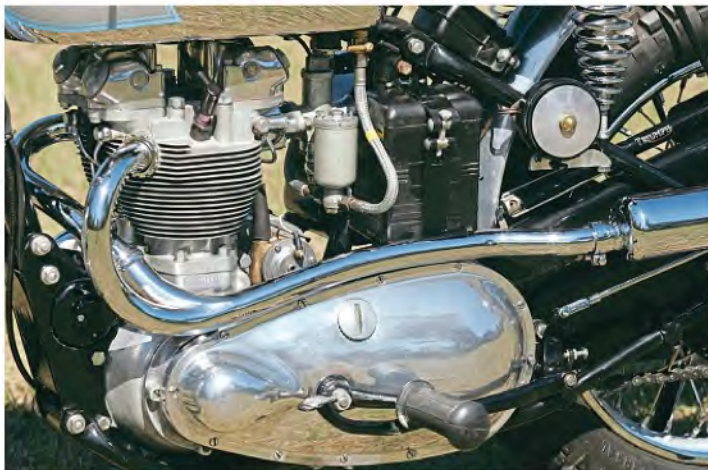
four-stroke single was still considered superior to the higher revving twin, until a trials rider called Jim Alves began winning events on a twin-cylinder 350 Triumph.

Developed from the 3TW that Turner designed for military use in 1939 (that would have 'fought them on the beaches', if the entire production hadn't been destroyed by the Luftwaffe when it bombed the Triumph factory), the 350 twin as campaigned by Alves was beefed up by fitting a 500cc Speed Twin engine featuring the same alloy head and cylinder used on the GP racer and used with great success by the factory Triumph trials team to win three gold medals and the team award in the 1948 Italian ISDT.

Capitalising on this sporting success, and reflecting the team trophy won in Italy earlier in the year, the new TR5 Trophy based on the successful trials iron was debuted at the prestigious Earl's Court show in 1948. Using a short wheelbase lightweight rigid frame similar to the pre-war 3TW and the wartime TRW twins, the new TR5 had a single carb engine from the 500cc Speed Twin fitted with modest camshafts, low compression pistons and the same coarse-finned alloy top-end as the ISDT bikes – a top end that had been developed during the war for the generator engine used in Lancaster bombers.

In basic trials trim the engine produced 26bhp, weighed in at a little over 300 pounds, including the quickly detachable lights, pillion seat and rear footrests, was good for 80mph and cost (without the new-fangled sprung hub option) a grand total of 195 pounds, 11 shillings and eight pence. ►





# CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

The sprung hub was a temporary measure, allowing the machine to be sprung while retaining the excellent rigid frame. Many are those who claim that the swinging arm frame was no improvement when it appeared

The primary side is also trad Triumph, with a carefully modded primary chaincase to suit the left-hand routed exhaust. Remote float carb and tucked-away CVC unit are both on show

The \$400 tyre pump. Not exactly its weight in gold, but certainly getting there

This version of the alloy engine has splayed exhaust ports and simple, effective exhaust pipe attachments. Top end oiling is supplied by external pipework and drained by external pipework. It must have made sense at the time





## TRIUMPH TROPHY TR5



The forks have a rep for being spindly, the front brake is not the fiercest on the planet, but they work well together, adding to the bike's excellent balance

The bike was an immediate success in all forms of motorcycle sport, particularly in the USA, where overhead valve machinery was limited to 500cc when competing against 750cc sidevalves in Class C racing and a full range of tuning parts allowed owners to make the Trophy faster, slower or more tractable – depending on whichever discipline they were competing in.

Despite its success, both on and off-road, the TR5 had a couple of problems, both caused by the ex-wartime generator top-end. While the coarse finning dissipated the heat from the parallel exhaust ports okay when the bike was travelling at a reasonable speed, the engine overheated when ridden slowly in trials-type situations, a problem never experienced in its original aircraft generator guise as the engine was enclosed in a shrouded box and cooled by a fan, a bit like an air-cooled VW.

The second problem was that compared to the Speed Twin and Tiger 100 engines the rough alloy square coarse-finned TR5 top-end looked as ugly

as an Albanian shot-putter. Something not lost on Edward Turner, who put pencil to paper and designed the beautiful close-finned splayed port alloy head and cylinder that replaced the ugly kid Joe square top-end in 1951.

More efficient cooling also allowed the compression ratio on the TR5 to be upped from 4.5:1 to a heady 6:1. Minor changes were made to the TR5 Trophy during the next few years, but not a lot – why spoil a good thing? – the big change coming in 1955 with a new swinging arm frame, big-bearing crankcases and a 33bhp bodycount thanks to the same 8:1 compression pistons as the T100.

But by 1958 the cards were on the table for Triumph's 500cc pre-unit twins and the TR5, along with the 5T, were discontinued with the T100 going to the wall a year later. The rigid TR5s with the close-pitched alloy engine, produced from 1951 to 1955, are however, without a doubt, one of the best-looking and most sought-after motorcycles Triumph ever produced. **934**







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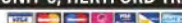


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TT-WINNING ABUS NORTON NRS588 RACER







# *Gone But Not* **FORGOTTEN**

*It was a peculiar time for Norton. Its rotary road bikes sold poorly, while its race bikes captured the imagination of race fans everywhere. Its finest hour was arguably the 1992 Senior TT...*

WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART. PHOTOS BY KYOICHI NAKAMURA



## TT-WINNING ABUS NORTON NRS588 RACER



**M**ORE THAN TWO decades on, the magic of it all still thrills the spirit – especially in the memory of those privileged to have witnessed it personally. The closest, fastest, most exciting and most enthralling Isle of Man Senior TT ever run resulted in a long-awaited all-British victory for super-Scot Steve Hislop and the Norton NRS588 rotary, painted an unaccustomed white to reflect the support of Steve's personal sponsor ABUS, the security equipment company, rather than the more usual black of Norton's mainland cigarette sponsors, John Player Special.

The JPS management must have kicked themselves when they heard the result for failing to find the extra budget to support Norton's quixotic,

### TOP & BOTTOM

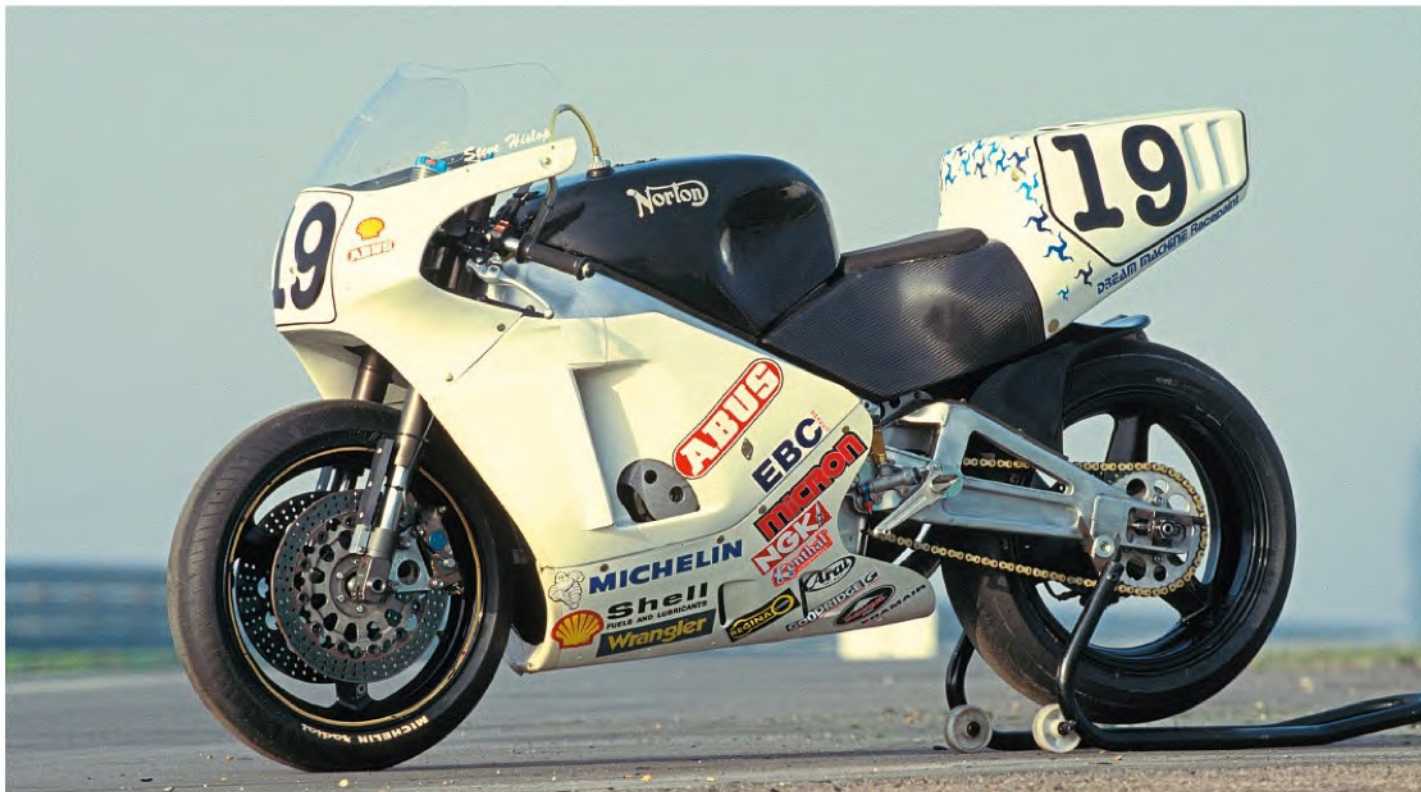
One rotary racer, ready to race – and the same machine with the bodywork revealed to show the mechanicals. Side right...

shoestring assault on Japanese supremacy in the world's oldest and most famous road race, one that Norton hadn't won since 1961. Back then the Senior TT was confined to 500cc GP racers, and a spotty kid named Mike Hailwood brought his single-cylinder Manx home first after the all-conquering MV Agustas uncharacteristically self-destructed. Laudable as Mike the Bike's win was (and both he and Derek Minter lapped at over 100mph for the first time ever on single-cylinder machines), Norton got that win by default – something you could never accuse Hislop of doing this time around.

To win the 1992 Senior TT, Hislop had not only to contend with the perennial Honda threat, led by factory-supported Honda Britain riders Phil McCallen and TT maestro Joey Dunlop, but with another







graduate – like himself – of the Honda school of TT talent, former TT F1 World champion and future four-time World Superbike champion Carl Fogarty, who later that same year would clinch the World Endurance title on a Kawasaki. Only, like Hislop, Carl wasn't riding a Honda this time, either, nor a Kwacker – but instead an OW 01 Yamaha, with lots of trick parts sourced from the factory race shop. And of course, there was always Joey Dunlop's kid brother Robert – Hislop's Norton teammate, riding a rotary racer in JPS colours that he'd leased for the event, thus giving the cigarette company a free ride in terms of exposure, since he didn't figure it was worth repainting the bodywork. Not an easy race to win, this one...

So it proved. The pace was electrifying from the

#### TOP & BOTTOM

From the left, then. Stripping off the bodywork reveals what a small machine this is

start, with the lead seesawing between Fogarty and Hislop, neither of them ever more than eight seconds ahead of the other on corrected time throughout the six-lap race.

The ABUS Norton rider lost time at his second fuel stop, with a filler cap that wouldn't close, leaving him three seconds behind the Yamaha at Glen Helen on the penultimate lap. But a superhuman effort saw him retake the lead by six seconds starting the final 37.73-mile lap, in which both riders broke the outright lap record, with Fogarty leaving it at 123.61mph to close to just 4.4 secs. But it wasn't enough – and Norton had won its first IoM 'TT race since 1973, when Peter Williams took victory in the F750 race on the monocoque JPN, defeating Jack Findlay's Suzuki triple in a race that was much





## TT-WINNING ABUS NORTON NRS588 RACER



more comparable with Hislop's great victory than Hailwood's '61 Senior win.

Indeed, Norton's TT victory was achieved totally against the odds, judging by the rotary racer's performance at the NW200 two weeks earlier in the hands of Hislop and Robert Dunlop, where the Norton team led by Barry Symmons blew up no less than 10 motors, five per rider, all of which had to be rebuilt before heading to the Island. "We were using the North West as a practice session for the TT," says Symmons, "but the engines kept on seizing because we were experimenting with jetting to try to get them to run lean enough to do two laps at the TT with the maximum 24 litres of fuel we were allowed to carry. The rotaries really drank petrol, so it amounted to trial and error to get the jetting right, without it either seizing or running out of fuel." Indeed, in the Formula 1 race at the start of TT Week,

### TOP LEFT TO RIGHT

The rotormotor is a physically small device; the complete absence of pistons and valvetrain ensures that. The water pump is mounted on the rotor shaft, while the oil pump is driven from the gearbox and is mounted outside the clutch. Primary drive is by belt

A view from the driveside reveals the sort-of external flywheel, alternator and ignition trigger, as well as a glimpse at the remarkable exhaust plumbing

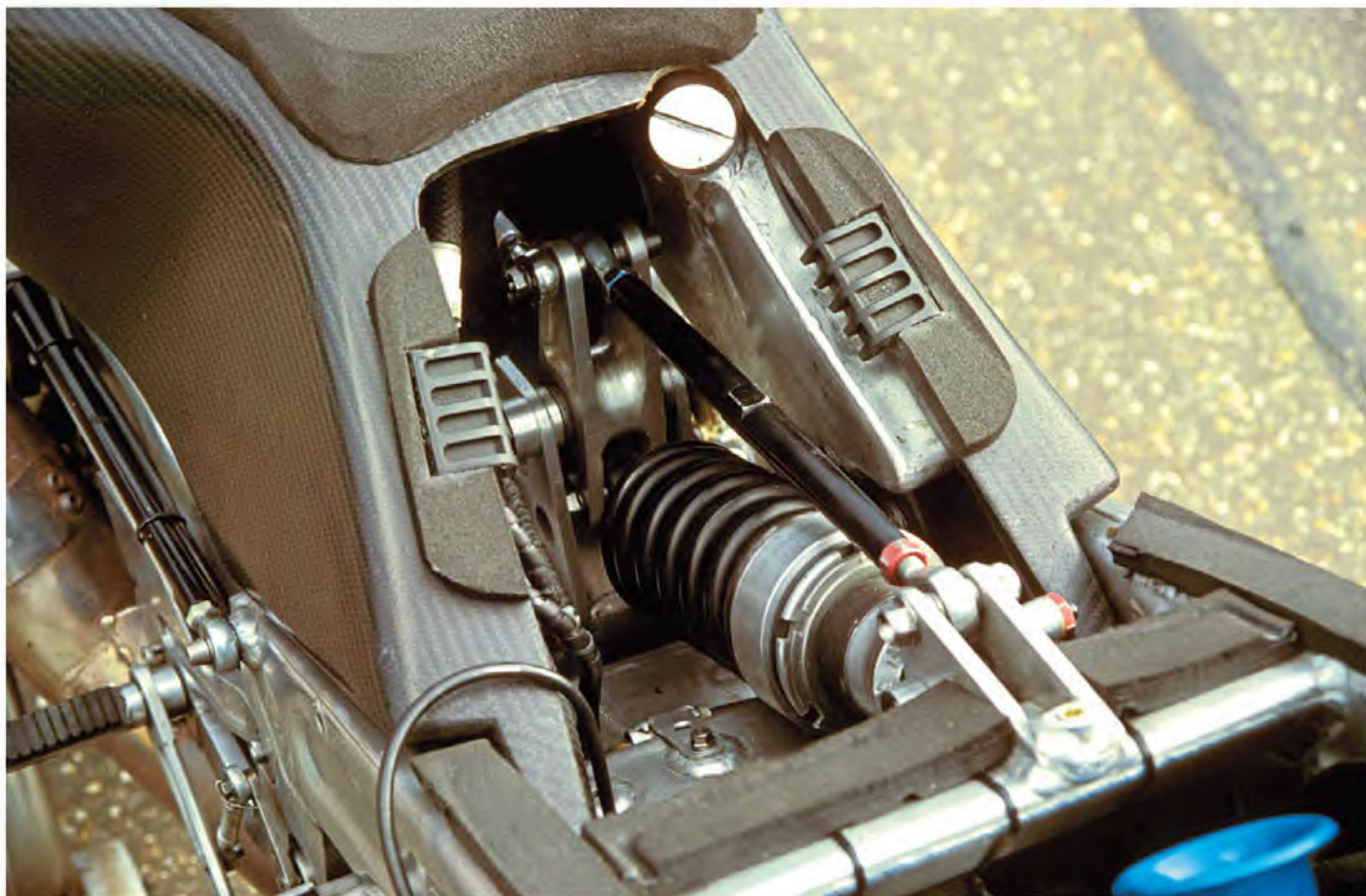
Rotary engines aren't particularly frugal devices, thriving on revs and a decent rate of fuel flow. Big carbs. Also visible are the twin mounts for the rear suspension

Robert Dunlop's JPS-liveried Rotary racer seized thanks to being jetted too lean, while Hislop's ABUS bike ran way too hot, causing the team to waste time in the pits removing the front mudguard. Even so, he still only finished runner-up to McCallen's Honda by just 12 seconds – so without that extra long pit stop, he just might have won...

So for the Senior race Norton fitted a separate third float chamber to the Keihin flatslides, in order to increase the fuel supply to the motor, and also maxed out the jetting to 240, compared to the 210s used before. That meant the engine ran 6°C cooler, but they also dropped the compression ratio slightly, fitted a smaller nozzle to the exhaust ejector system on the Micron exhaust to draw more cooling air through the centre of the engine between the rotor housings, and left the front mudguard off for the Senior race. Some extra vents in the fairing and







#### ABOVE & RIGHT

That doubled-up monoshock arrangement. It works, so says Sir Alan

#### LEFT

Alan Cathcart and Ron Haslam having a bit of a tussle, both of them on racing rotaries

internal ducting maximised the flow of cooling air to the outside of the engine, while to leave nothing to chance, they also used a front tyre with a softer construction, to improve flexibility and minimise the chance of heat transfer rearwards. It all worked – and with a master craftsman of the TT Course at the controls in the shape of Steve Hislop, the Norton team achieved the victory they and every Britbike fan in the world had been praying they'd earn.

Still, it didn't earn them the acclaim they'd expected back home at the Norton factory in Shenstone. "By that time there was already a fair amount of unpleasantness within Norton," says Barry Symmons. "The chaps on the factory floor were thrilled to bits about our win, but believe it or not nobody on the management side ever congratulated a single person in the race team on our victory. Just amazing." Perhaps inevitably, at the end of the season the Norton team was disbanded when the parent factory slipped into insolvency.

Snetterton is a poor substitute for the Mountain course, but then it's better than Mallory, where I'd previously tested the 1991 Norton NRS588, in terms of sampling a bike that will clock close on 190mph in a straight line. So when Norton team manager Barry Symmons invited me to sample Hislop's TT-winning bike – complete with engraved plaque to prove it was The One – at the Norfolk circuit, it gave me a chance to keep my Norton rotary education properly up to date. Having ridden each version of the rotary racer, during the years it had progressed from an after-hours pet project for Brian Crighton, the man who first gave the rotary wings, to a full-on works race effort with tobacco sponsorship and high-profile



TV coverage, I'd been able to appreciate how much had been achieved on resources that would barely keep 500cc GP teams in tyres for a full season. And with phenomenal success, too, for Norton won the British Superbike title in 1989 with Steve Spray, repeated the feat the following year with Trevor Nation and then finished second in the Supercup series in 1991 with star recruit Ron Haslam who, fresh from 500GP racing, set lap records galore with the new Harris-built, Ron Williams-designed Maxton chassis.

Norton returned to GP racing officially for the first time in four decades when permitted by the FIM to race the rotary in the British 500GP at Donington, then in 1992 it reached the pinnacle of success with Steve Hislop's victory in the Senior TT, matched by Robert Dunlop's win later that year in the Ulster GP – Norton's first victory at Dundrod in almost three decades. Even Norton's rivals, or those who denigrated the rotary engine concept, had to admit this was quite a record, especially considering the dire financial straits of the parent company during



## TT-WINNING ABUS NORTON NRS588 RACER



Steve Hislop starting the 1992 Senior TT on ABUS Norton

## Rotaries Ride Again

NORTON'S ROTARY RACING efforts of the late 1980s and early 90s were undeniably audacious and ambitious, doubly so given the innovative engineering involved and the uncertain state of the firm's finances.

Their success on track, especially on the Isle of Man, gave the bikes and their riders superstar status, which inspires enthusiasts to this day. The sight of a single rotary racebike being fired up is the highlight of many major events, and crowds gather whenever one of the surviving works machines is wheeled out.

So imagine the impact at the Manx Classic TT this August, when 15 – yes, 15 – racing rotary Nortons take to the Mountain circuit. It's rare enough to see one rotary let loose on a racetrack. In an

extraordinary effort, almost as ambitious as racing the machines in the first place, the National Motorcycle Museum will reunite their treasured collection of works racers with many of their original riders. All 15 bikes are scheduled to take to the track for a 'Norton, the rotary years' parade lap on Saturday, August 29. It's not a race, obviously... but Team NMM Racing, aided by Brian Crighton, have carefully prepped the bikes, which will be piloted by the likes of Trevor Nation, Steve Spray, John McGuinness and William Dunlop, standing for his father Robert. Somehow, we suspect that none of the riders will be taking things easy.

There will be another chance to see the bikes in action as part of the VMCC's Festival of Jurby on Sunday, August 30. They'll also be on static display in the Pop-Up Museum for the whole of the Classic TT festival, accompanied by another 15 Norton works racers, dating back to the 'Rem Fowler



Norton', a faithful tribute to the twin that won the first-ever Manx TT back in 1907.

For many spectators, however, the highlight of the festival will be the Formula 1 Classic TT race on Monday, August 31. That's when William Dunlop will ride one of the museum's original rotary racers from the 1992 British championship season – the year when Steve Hislop won the Senior TT against the might of the works Yamaha ridden by Carl Fogarty. Says

Dunlop: "With my father's history on the bike this was too good an opportunity to turn down. It was his favourite bike as it was a real challenge to ride and the Isle of Man will be a great place to race it. The Classic TT is now my favourite meeting of the year so I'm particularly excited to be on the rotary Norton."

If you're on the Isle of Man for the Classic TT then you're in for a once in a lifetime treat. See [nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk](http://nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk)





most of this time, thanks to the depredations of the smart suit brigade who milked it dry of vital cash.

Sadly, had I but known it, my ride on Hislop's TT-winner was a farewell to arms, for straight after my test the bike travelled to the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham where it now resides, a museum piece that should have been swooping round the Island the following June, to wave the British flag in an effort to repeat its 1992 Senior TT victory, if only Norton could have found the resources to continue racing in the Isle of Man, as it did on short circuits. But it didn't, so instead, look at these photos and remember the way it was all those years ago, while we take a lap or two round Snetterton on Steve's Senior-winning mount.

Compared to Ron Haslam's short-circuit bike, which I also rode the same day at Snetterton, the Hislop machine couldn't be more different. Even with the settings he used in the IoM only approximated for Snetterton, it was like the difference between a GP racer and a (very powerful!) street bike. Haslam's Norton felt taut, low-slung and compact, with hard suspension and a ground-hugging ride height, as well as a distinct forward weight bias that had the rear wheel waving in the air everywhere I used the very effective front brake cocktail of 310mm iron PVM discs mated to AP four-piston callipers to anything like max effect. It felt what it was: a rotary racer set up like a 500GP bike for a rider who'd spent the past decade riding such machines on purpose-built circuits at the highest level.

"To be honest, the first time I rode the Norton in TT practice, I thought I'd made a terrible mistake," Steve Hislop once told me ruefully. "The way Ron had it set up was completely unsuitable for the Island, and it was actually quite a battle to persuade the team it had to be altered very drastically in terms of handling to make it rideable at race-winning speeds there. But I got my way in the end – just as well, really!"

Too right. Basically, Steve needed the bike set up with much softer suspension settings, and a higher ride height, which you noticed immediately you sat on his Norton in the pits – it was measurably taller off the ground, with a softer ride and more suspension travel, than Haslam's short circuit racer. With a 50mm longer wheelbase than the '91 version of the same Maxton chassis, it was also much more stable round fast sweepers like Snetterton's Coram Curve (or the 33rd Milestone on the TT Course), at the expense of some understeer in slower corners with the power on – although the more conservative 23.5° head angle Steve had opted for (vs. 22° on Ron's bike) surely had something to do with this. On the other hand, the longer wheelbase also meant it didn't wheelie quite as easily out of turns as the other bike, and traction was better out of slower turns like the Snetterton chicane under something approaching full power. Parliament Square, Ramsey Hairpin, Waterworks, the Gooseneck – all easy meat for the ABUS Norton in TT-mode, especially with that lovely, linear power delivery from the twin-rotor engine.

However, another factor in the improved traction may well have been the auxiliary damper unit that Maxton's Ron Williams had grafted onto the modified Koni rear shock for 1992. "The problem was the





## TT-WINNING ABUS NORTON NRS588 RACER



### ABOVE

Tussles can continue for quite a time, we're told...

inherent surge of the rotary engine running on a closed throttle," explained Ron. "The engine speed varies, which loads the gearbox and winds up the rear shock, then unloads it again. By using an additional damper unit that comes into play after about 40mm of travel on the main shock (which can run a lighter, more sensitive spring as a result), we can control this unusual problem. On a bumpy circuit, too, the second damper comes in earlier to stop the rear end squatting too much, which improves traction, so there's a double benefit."

The system worked well out of the chicane at Snetterton, or the Esses, where you're using hard acceleration in a low gear – but it must really have come into its own in the Island over the bumpier sections, especially when taking a fast turn on a closed or trailing throttle, where the rotary engine's traditional hunting trait might upset the traction. The suspension also seemed very sensitive, in spite of being softly sprung, and this could have been due to the auxiliary damper system – I could actually feel the surface ripples left by the cars in Riches, as the rear wheel moved smoothly over them without chatter. Haslam's bike didn't like the dip on the exit there at all, shaking its head every lap as the stiffer forks got upset at having to cope with what by TT standards was just a wee bump! Hislop's softer-sprung bike just took it all in its stride, with just a slight dip and dive as the White Power upside down forks did their job. Following Japanese Supermono ace Shinichiro Ohura on the Haslam Norton through there on his guest test ride for the JPS team confirmed the difference in behaviour between the two bikes. Horses for courses.

However, different as the two set-ups were, both Nortons had one thing in common; the twin-rotor engine's liquid-smooth power delivery and unbelievably meaty torque at almost any point in the revband. It was surely one of the great motorcycle power units of its era in racing form, and as effective

as the similar but two-thirds as powerful engine in the F1 Sport road bike was frankly underwhelming by comparison. Barry Symmons' team refined the engine considerably during the 1992 season, fitting bigger 37mm Keihin flatslides, which gave a very immediate but still controllable response, and helped unlock the waves of torque in the motor at almost any point between 6000 rpm and the 11,500 rpm appointment with the rev-limiter.

The biggest difference, though, was the power delivery, which although power rose to 147bhp at 10,000 rpm for 1992, was indeed actually more linear and progressive than on the '91 bike, which was much more peaky than previous rotary racers, in an effort to wrest more Japanese-beating power out of the engine. This must again have made a big difference to TT performance, coupled with the crisp carburation and improved throttle response offered by the Keihins compared to the Amals fitted to previous rotaries I'd tried. Just twist the wrist at almost any revs in almost any gear and the Norton delivered. What a great Island engine.

Because it was fast, too – very fast. As luck would have it, I spent half a dozen laps running with Rob McElnea on his Loctite Yamaha OW 01 Superbike, presumably not too far removed from Carl Fogarty's TT bike in terms of performance, and the Norton just romped away from the Yamaha down the straights. It was an educational comparison. "You can see what we're up against," said Rob afterwards. "I couldn't stay with you in a straight line, because the Norton really packs a punch out of turns and weighs about 80lbs less than our bikes. That's a big advantage!"

The British bike also, in contrast to 1991, had a gearbox that worked. This was the six-speeder lifted straight from the FZR1000 Yamaha, mated to a Gates Kevlar toothed-belt primary drive to deliver a smooth, precise change that allowed you to ride the bike like a two-stroke if you wanted (and as Ron



Haslam certainly did!), by standing on the brakes and zapping down two or three gears at a time with the clutch home in a way that would have been unthinkable with the harsh-shifting, semi-vintage, five-speed Triumph box fitted previously. You did need to be very precise using the lever, though, else it was too easy to get a false neutral. But with zero engine braking on a rotary engine, two-stroke style, this was certainly the approved manner of riding the ABUS Norton, especially as the only disconcerting thing I found about the engine's behaviour was its very high idle speed. This combined with the hunting effect of the rotary engine to make the engine run on into slow turns, so I sometimes ended up missing the apex. Holding the clutch in seemed to be the best way of coping, but Ron Haslam had a better idea: "I don't like that either," he agreed, "so what I do is use the back brake to lock the rear wheel when I have it off the deck under braking. That stops the engine! Then, when the wheel comes down again, it restarts OK – but you've not been pushed past the apex of the corner by the engine running on. It's definitely the best way to solve that problem." Thanks, Ron – but I'm not sure I'm expert enough to try that!

Eighteen years after that Snetterton test, I was asked to ride the Senior TT-winning NRS588 ABUS Norton once again, demonstrating it for the National Motorcycle Museum at Donington Park's big 2010 International Historic race meeting in company with Trevor Nation, Terry Rymer and the rest of the rotary racers on the actual bikes they raced back then. I was honoured to be standing in for Steve Hislop, sadly no longer with us after his tragic 2003 death in a helicopter crash. I couldn't help but think back to the year before he passed away, when I'd interviewed

**BELOW**  
The stuff history's made of...

the 11-time TT race-winner about his Senior TT victory on the Norton, on the 10th anniversary of his win.

"I've been fortunate to have a lot of success in the Island, but that race on the Norton was the best one I ever had there," said Steve. "Carl was such a determined competitor and I knew he'd not stop trying till the very last yard of the very last lap. I wasn't sure I'd be racing in the TT that year till right at the last minute, when ABUS came up with the cash to fund Norton bringing a bike over for me. We finished second in the Formula 1 race at the start of the week and that proved the rotary could last the distance. But in the Senior race, which is the one you really want to win, I had a problem closing the filler cap at my second pit stop. I just put my head down and went for it and managed to just edge Carl on corrected time at the end.

"We never saw each other during the race, because I started no.19 and he was up at the front (Fogarty started no.4 – AC), so signals were vital and I owe my win to the people around the course who kept me in the picture with what was happening on time. If not for them, I'd have had no clue how I was doing and how a win was still on the cards. I'd never ridden so hard in the Isle of Man as I did in that race – and I never did again!"

That was the rotary Norton's final appearance in the Isle of Man for 17 years, until Michael Dunlop's ill-fated attempt to race one for Norton's new owner Stuart Garner in 2009. But thanks to ABUS, Steve Hislop ended his TT career on the highest note possible in 1992 – and Norton could remind us that it is still, as its company slogan used to say, Simply Unapproachable. Well, by 4.4 seconds, anyway... **CBC**





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# MATCHLESS BY NAME

*The tale of what one man got up to in his shed at the weekend*

WORDS AND PHOTOS: PHIL MATHER







**S**ometime last year it became apparent that my friends regarded me as a fossil. My bike was the oldest in the group and when anybody asked if I'd thought about having a change, getting something newer or 21st century, I would stare at them in bemusement.

Why? My bike isn't that old – a classic maybe, but not vintage.

It has disc brakes and 12 volt electrics, wipers – sorry, turn signals – and an electric starter. It's reliable – it starts, goes and stops as well as any bike I've ever owned. It's probably the best bike I've ever had.

No, the bike's just fine. I may be prehistoric, but the bike's just fine.

Or maybe it wasn't any more. Maybe I was out of touch. Maybe I should take a look around at what was currently cutting the mustard in motorcycling terms and reassess my point of view.

Rocking up (he talks the talk, but can he walk the walk?) at a local 'bike night' venue, I was determined to absorb the ambience of the here and now. No more pining for my A10 or G80, here was row upon row of cutting-edge two-wheeled techno-wizardry. I would immerse myself in YZ-Rs and ZX-Rs, GiX-ers and FiX-ers and Moulinex mixers. After all, I watch Moto GP on the TV. I know which bikes are the Hondas and which are the Yamahas. I can tell the difference between a Ducati Desmosedici and a satellite Promac whatchamacallit. I should be up to speed in no time.

Just 15 minutes later I was standing in the queue for a hot dog, my mind spinning and my eyes glazed. It had become clear very rapidly that I hadn't the faintest idea where to start or what to look for. But salvation was at hand – a deep growl followed by a couple of crisp barks from an extremely loud exhaust pipe announced the arrival of something that appealed immediately to my primordial senses and I abandoned the queue to satisfy my curiosity.

Parked in a corner generally reserved for old dogs and late arrivals was a thing of beauty. "What's a Munch Matchless?" I heard somebody ask. Good question. Here was a Matchless single-cylinder engine in a Norton Featherbed frame, Roadholder front forks with – just a minute, is that really a Friedl Munch front brake, the sort I'd only ever seen once before on a 1200cc four-cylinder Munch Mammoth? Yes, indeed it was.

The few people who came to look the bike over had drifted away by the time the owner returned,

## ABOVE:

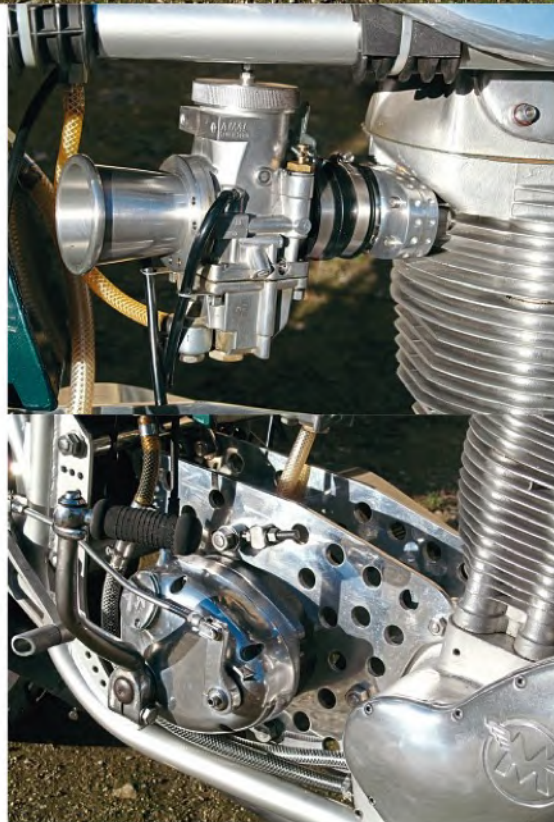
Norton's own single engine carries its magneto behind the barrel, the Matchless in front. Fitting the magneto in front of the engine and behind the frame tubes without having the engine a long way back is not too easy

## RIGHT:

Deep breathing is provided by a Mk2 Concentric. The method of mounting is exquisite

## BELOW RIGHT:

The cover suggests that the gearbox is a Matchless item, but inside the casings live Norton Commando internals







clutching a glass of beer. It transpired that Dave Vaughan was not only the bike's owner, but also the creator of this intriguing machine. It had taken him, at a guess, around two years to finally put it all together, but many of the parts had been acquired over a much longer period of time, either from mates or from regular visits to autojumbles. Like so many of us, Dave has an eye for something 'that might come in handy' one day, and being a compulsive specials builder he likes to keep things on the shelf for when that day arrives.

That's how he came by the front wheel with the ventilated twin-leading shoe brake, which looked so impressive on a stall at Netley Marsh that he had to get it. "A few of the spokes were loose but I didn't think much of it until I discovered that some of the spoke holes in the hub had worn – and that the hub was made from magnesium. I was lucky to find a local company that could weld a repair, otherwise it would have been a rather expensive mantelpiece trophy rather than an extremely impressive front brake."

So why a Matchless engine in a Featherbed frame? Why a café racer when there are so many styles of bike to choose from these days? What motivated the project in the first place?

Going back a fair few years, Dave and his mates were ton-up boys who lusted after BSA Gold Stars and fashioned their road bikes along the lines of racers. It was the era of clip-ons and rear-sets, big tanks and small seats. His personal heroes were specials builder Dennis Jones, the Rolls-Royce engineer who designed and built his own racing

#### ABOVE:

Nothing Is Easy Dept. Matchless fitted the alternator stator into the outer half of the primary chaincase. It works well there. However, if you decide to fit your Matchless transmission with a belt and without the chaincase, what should you do with the alternator? The answer is here

#### RIGHT:

The primary drive is by belt to a Norton racing clutch. There has been some consideration of lightness



motorcycles and German sidecar ace Helmut Fath.

Jones began racing motorcycles before the Second World War, but seeking a competitive edge he poured his talents into creating, from scratch, a supercharged flat-four two-stroke, several 250cc double overhead camshaft vertical twins and finally, in the 1950s, a twin overhead camshaft four-cylinder with his own frame, wheels and carburetors. After a bad crash at Mallory Park, Jones sidelined the four project to concentrate on the design of a 250cc single-cylinder. Nevertheless, he continued racing into the 1960s before retiring to establish a business making invalid cars in Long Eaton, Derbyshire.

Track success may have eluded Dennis Jones, but sidecar racer Helmut Fath was well known for his exploits on the Isle of Man, first on a BMW-powered outfit of his own design and later on a machine





The Matchless scrambles single engine appears to fit into Norton's frame easily... but the reality is a little different

with his own four-cylinder URS powerplant. After a successful start in which he won the 1960 Sidecar World Championship, Fath's racing career faltered following a crash at the Nürburgring that cost the life of his passenger, Alfred Wohlgemuth. It took him the best part of a year to recover and initially he returned to motorcycle sport as an engine tuner.

Fath-prepared machines proved so successful that when he was ready to race again BMW turned down his request for a factory ride out of pique. Undaunted, he designed and built his URS outfit (named after his hometown of Urnsbach) powered by a 500cc four-cylinder, eight-valve, double overhead camshaft motor with which he won the Sidecar World Championship in 1968.

Just to prove what a small world this is, Fath teamed up with Friedl Munch to create the solo Munch URS featuring a Rickman chassis. The bike won the 1970 Austrian Grand Prix on its first outing and claimed fourth place in the German Grand Prix at Hockenheim that same year. So now you know what got Dave Vaughan mainlining on specials. Small enterprises taking on the world or, as Dave puts it: "Men in sheds who created wonderful machines."

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***"A motor with the legendary bottom-end punch of the all-alloy G80 could, apparently, be coaxed to top speeds in excess of 130mph!"***

Back in his own shed he had a wideline Featherbed frame that is as good a start as any for a special builder and reading about one man's success with a pushrod Matchless single-cylinder engine in 20 years of short circuit racing and nine rides in the Manx Grand Prix convinced him that AMC scrambler power was the way to fill the gap between the frame tubes.

A motor with the legendary bottom-end punch of the all-alloy G80 could, apparently, be coaxed to top speeds in excess of 130mph. The tuner/builder/racer in question was Ajay-Matchless guru Ken De Groome, who had been clocked at 134mph past the Highlander on the Isle of Man. What's more, Ken offered a tuning service, advice and a list of special parts to anybody wishing to emulate his success. The only problem was that Dave didn't have an engine.

Undaunted, he continued to trawl autojumbles for likely parts. A set of short Roadholder forks with an alloy top yoke came from Stafford and a short-circuit, three-gallon petrol tank turned up at Kempton Park. And then, by a stroke of pure luck, a G80CS engine and gearbox arrived on his doorstep – well almost. British bike and Pre-65 Scrambles specialists Nobby Clarke Motorcycles in nearby Holt, Wiltshire, had taken delivery of some ex-South African police machinery, including an all-alloy G80 motor with an alternator crankshaft. Some things were clearly meant to be.

The motor proved to be in an extremely good condition and so Dave wasted no time in contacting Ken De Groome ([ken.degroome@btinternet.com](mailto:ken.degroome@btinternet.com)) to





discuss his requirements. Ken had shortened the stroke on his racing engine by two inches by fitting a Carillo conrod made for the ohc Matchless G50 motor and modifying the cylinder barrel and pushrods to suit. Dave wanted to retain the long stroke of the original G80, opting for the appropriate Carillo rod and also to retain the hairpin pattern valve springs AMC had used.

Whereas Ken had left the flywheels unmodified to prevent his motor spinning up too quickly from low revs, Dave had his lightened before the balance factor was adjusted to take into account that the motor was being fitted into a Featherbed. A 12:1 piston was another of Dave's deviations from the De Groome racer specification, but he recognised the value of Ken's painstakingly formulated camshaft profiles and revised cam follower design and had the engine modified to accept these.

While Ken was working his magic at his workshop in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, Dave, meanwhile, had fitted a Norton Commando gear cluster into the box and had set about designing a square section swinging arm to accept a Manx rear hub found on another visit to Stafford. Constructing the swinging arm, he admits, was to prove a challenge, as first a friend had to teach him the finer points of welding, but the newfound skill was to prove invaluable when it came to positioning the engine in the frame.

"I always understood that the key to good handling was to get the engine as far forward and as low as possible. Ken De Groome had carried out his own modification, reducing the width of the lower front crankcase bolt, but I went further by scalloping the inside profile of the offside frame tube adjacent to the bolt." Such a small detail you would never notice when looking at the completed machine, but if you've ever tried fitting an AMC single into a Featherbed you might be curious to know how it is that the magneto on Dave's bike is so tight against the frame front downtubes.

Getting the engine and gearbox into the frame was no mean feat. Hardboard templates were made initially, to determine their relative position allowing for a practical distance between the crankshaft and the gearbox mainshaft and for adjustment of the primary drive. Then the engine plates were cut from 1/4-inch LM25 aluminium sheet. "The engine plates

were a major undertaking because I knew exactly where I wanted the engine and gearbox to sit in the frame but I had nothing to follow by way of reference, I was breaking new ground. I'm not sure I'm happy with the plates now, the way they look, but once all the big lumps had been bolted together it was a much more straightforward job to fit everything else," says Dave.

Further evidence of Dave's skill can be found in the adapter that carries the alternator on the left-hand side of the crankcase. Bob Newby supplied the primary drive and clutch, but the belt had to be narrowed before it would fit in order to clear the stator and maintain the alignment between the engine crankshaft and clutch pulleys.

Having the alternator crank provided a neat solution to powering the lights and eliminated the need for a total loss battery system that would have been necessary without a dynamo drive. A standard Lucas rear unit looks perfectly at home on the back of the glass fibre 'racing' seat – origin unknown, but pure Sixties nevertheless – and a car accessory daytime running light is set into the lower edge of the D & M Engineering Manx flyscreen.

So what controls the power between the alternator and the lights? "I asked Paul Goff the same question," admits Dave. "He sent me a little magic box which works perfectly. It's called an 'A Reg One' regulator/rectifier, which handles the 12 volt output from the

**LEFT:**  
The fuel tank came from an autojumble

**ABOVE:**  
The controls fall readily to hand and foot. Of course they do, the bike was built by its rider

## More To Come!

A few weeks ago Dave contacted us to say that his rebuild was nearing completion and asked if we would like to take a look. The result is stunning – lightweight frame, titanium wheel and swinging arm spindles and a paint job that would make Plumstead proud. Can't wait to hear the result when he runs it up the airstrip!







## ABOVE:

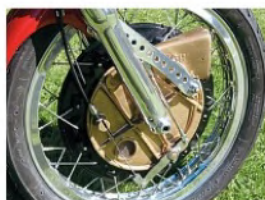
The rear wheel is held in check by a square-section swinging arm, owner-fabricated of course

## ABOVE RIGHT:

The unusual top yoke supports a single instrument. It's a tachometer and calibrated in a mysterious manner

## BELOW:

The Munch front brake, made out of magnesium



alternator that I then routed through an on/off switch for the lights. Very straightforward, it does the job and you can't say fairer than that." If you ever have the need, Paul Goff ([www.norbsa02.freeuk.com](http://www.norbsa02.freeuk.com)) can supply similar magic boxes for 6 volt systems and for systems that incorporate coil ignition.

An Amal Mk2 Concentric carburettor bought at Netley Marsh was jetted as close as was possible without running the motor and then rubber mounted on a hand-made manifold. Dave designed the exhaust pipe to follow the line of the frame and had it made up by Technical Tubes at Three Legged Cross in Dorset, while the megaphone clamped to its rear end came from Fred Walmsley Developments in Lancashire, home of achingly beautiful single-cylinder four-stroke racers should you ever be tempted to dabble. Such a pedigree must undoubtedly add considerable extra horsepower to the G80, no doubt in direct relationship to the sound that emanates from the end of the pipe!

No kick-start lever could be found to clear the gear pedal and exhaust, so Dave welded his own from three separate parts and a trials bike sidestand was suitably modified and attached to the frame with a hand-crafted bracket.

For the finishing touches, Dave turned once more to the shelves in his workshop. Parts gathered together as the project progressed now found their home – Falcon rear shock absorbers, Tarozzi footrests and pedals and Tomaselli levers twistgrip mounted on alloy clip-on handlebars.

Sourcing the right parts that wouldn't look out of place had always been uppermost in Dave's mind and there would be few who would argue that he hadn't achieved his goal. Even that Munch front brake had been developed for road racing years before the conception of the Mammoth and flanged alloy rims and a polished alloy petrol tank are timeless classics in their own right. But does that all-alloy motor deliver as good as it looks?

"Starting was difficult at first and I had to fiddle quite a bit with the carb and the ignition timing before I got it right. Fortunately for the neighbours I was able to take the bike over to a local wartime airfield and run it on the main runway. Spark plugs caused a bit of head scratching, but eventually I settled with a NGK BP7ES."

The acid test came when Dave ran the Matchless up the track alongside a friend riding a modern Japanese bike fitted with a speedometer. "Don't ask," he says with a smile. "The speedo is like the rev counter, which isn't connected at the moment and isn't anything I'm thinking of changing – work in progress!"

So, what'll it do? "I said keep alongside until we get to 100 then raise your hand. Well, we got to 100 and it was running as smooth as silk, no misfires, no vibration, and since we had plenty of track left I kept going until the power flattened out. We touched 115 mph, which isn't too shabby, is it?"

And that might have been the end of the story but for the fact that Dave is an incurable perfectionist. Having taken the bike back to Ken De Groome, who checked it over and pronounced it fit, Dave decided that he wanted more speed and that serious weight loss was the likely solution to gaining some extra miles an hour. And while I was firmly convinced that this was the kind of bike that I needed far more than something sensible and practical and Japanese and would have settled for it as it stood, Dave took it all apart and started again.

Once upon a time not so very long ago, a guy named Dave Vaughan sat in his workshop. On the bench in front of him stood a brand new replica Manx Norton frame. Over in one corner lay his Matchless G80CS engine and gearbox. Already, Dave had proved that Matchless into Norton would go. Now he was determined to prove that it would go faster! **CBC**



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# British Classic Buyer's Guide

**B**uying a classic bike is easy, although identifying which classic is your own particular dream bike may be less so. What is also easy – too easy – is to get the exact spec wrong, or the price wrong. There are, for example, many different Triumph Bonneville's, and if you decide that your life will only be complete if shared with a Bonnie then you need to know which sort of Bonnie you want to share it with. It all sounds simple, but it's not. Sometimes. If you know you want a 1965 T120TT and nothing else, you'll be fine.

Sticking with the Bonnie idea, if you want the whole 1950s Rocker thing, complete with pre-unit charm, genuine Edward Turner styling and a glorious tangerine paint job, then you are not going to be happy with a 1972 T120

rather than a T120 from 1959 or so. This applies to all marques and all models. Before you spend your money, go ride a few of the bikes on your shortest short list. Join the relevant owners' club – that part is essential; join the club before you spend your money – so you can meet owners, maybe even ride their bikes, and learn about the reality of life with your dream bike.

It is always a great idea to study prices too. Stay aware of the movements in the market; it's so much better to buy a Bonnie for Bantam money than the other way around!

And if you need specific advice, don't hesitate to ask us here at Classic Bike Guide; we've bought more bikes than most between us, and made most of the mistakes, too...



## How to use the guide

This guide is as exhaustive as we could fit into our pages. We'll update it two or three times a year as we trawl the marketplace, and this Britbike guide alternates with a Japanese guide as well as a survey of European classics. We offer you just two prices; the CBG High Price is for a top-notch, top-spec model in excellent condition. You might not win concours awards with the bike, but you'd expect to be a contender. At that price, your target machine should have a new MoT, its tyres should sparkle, its chrome and alloy should be excellent. Its paint should not be dull, and it should run like the dream machine you're after. Oil should not dribble from its casings, it should start easily and readily. If it has more than one carb, then they should be balanced and the bike should tick

over reliably. There should be no smoke, and although a stack of receipts is not essential, you should find evidence that whoever did the restoration knew what they were doing. Cables should be entirely un-frayed, the controls should fall readily to hand and foot, and the lighting system should both lighten the darkness and charge its own battery. Accept nothing less.

Also accept that if you make the increasingly astute decision to buy from a trader then you are quite likely to pay more than our High Price. Traders make a living supplying folk like us with the bikes we want, tolerate endless tyre-kicking, usually accept trade-ins, and they should provide decent after-sales service. All this costs them, and they need to make a profit.

The CBG Low Price is for a complete motorcycle. The bike may have the dregs of an MoT. It will certainly run and ride, although it may not be entirely sorted. Most of all, it may not be standard, the engine and frame may not have been paired in the factory, it may be cosmetically challenged, with rusty exhausts, a split seat and drooping unlubricated cables, and sundry systems may not work. It may be a less popular version of a popular model: that 1971 'tall' T120 Bonneville springs to mind. It may easily be what we used to refer to as a 'working' bike. Classic workers are less common now than they once were, but they are still about.

There are two other categories which it is entirely impossible to quote prices for. The first is the entirely original and unrestored

motorcycle. These machines are – obviously – increasingly hard to find, and some folk will pay a high premium for them. Indeed, 'barn find' machines often fetch astonishingly high prices because they're unrestored ... although you can rarely know that for a fact. Lots of older, 1980s, say, restorations are passed off as 'original' barn finds. Often they're not original at all.

The second category is the concours winner; the completely elegant machine which is better by far than it was when it first invaded a showroom. When these bikes change hand in the public marketplace (and many of them change hands inside clubs, advertised only by word of mouth) their prices can be very high indeed. We cannot offer guidance here; what you pay is up to you.

Happy hunting...



## AJS & MATCHLESS

**B**y 1950, Associated MotorCycles Limited in South London were building bikes under both AJS and Matchless badges, and at one time boasted the largest factory in the world dedicated to motorcycles production. They later acquired the Norton marque, at first keeping production in Birmingham but eventually moving Norton in with AJS and Matchless. AMC also built James and Francis-Barnett motorcycles (also in the Midlands and not at Plumstead). So the varied range of models offered under the AMC banner stretched from 98cc 2-strokes all the way through to stonking 750cc 4-stroke superbikes. The company was also successful in two-wheeled sports, and apart from the dedicated and highly specialised road-racers they also built a lot of competition-biased roadsters. The whole lot collapsed in 1966, and was reborn as Norton-Villiers, concentrating on the Norton Commando series and a range of 2-stroke AJS off-landers.

Model designations are shown for AJS, with Matchless equivalents shown in brackets, as the two marques increasingly differed only in finish and trim styles. The bikes are very solid, well-engineered and rewarding to ride. Spares are plentiful, and they boast an excellent and very active Owners' Club.

**Model 14 (Matchless G2)**  
248cc (70 x 65mm) ohv single  
340lb | 75mph | 1958-66

**AMC UNDERSTOOD THAT** they needed a lightweight 4-stroke motorcycle to rival Triumph's Cub and BSA's C-range. Intelligently, they used a bicycle based on their James 2-strokes and designed their own new 4-stroke engine to fit. That engine appeared to be of 'unit'

construction (where engine and gearbox are built into shared castings), but the gearbox was separate and cylindrical, attached to the crankcases by a pair of steel straps. The 250s and the similar 350s were not a commercial success and are not widely sought-after today. However, they are fun to ride (CSR 250s in particular) and offer a low-cost intro to classic motorcycling with plentiful spares and simple construction for straightforward spannering. The best are the AMC-forked versions and the late CSRs. As with most AMC models, the 250 was available in standard, 'S' (chrome mudguards), CS (off-road styling), and CSR (café-racer) versions.

### Prices

low £1350 | high £2250

**Model 8 (Matchless G5)**  
348cc (72 x 82.5mm) ohv single  
350lb | 70mpg | 80mph | 1960-62

**BIGGER VERSION OF** the Model 14, built with better forks taken from the early 1950s heavyweight but with a slightly feeble brake from the 2-stroke range. They provide a better ride than the early 250s, although by 1962 there was nothing between them apart from better torque. The 350s didn't last long as they competed with AMC's own heavyweight 350 singles, without being better, just slightly lighter. Surprisingly quick and pleasant to ride.

### Prices

low £1500 | high £2250

**Model 16 (Matchless G3)**  
348cc (69 x 93mm until 1963 then 72 x 85.5mm) ohv single  
400lb | 80mpg | 75mph | 1945-66

**SOUNDLY ENGINEERED AND** finished trad Brit single. AMC singles are immensely strong, engineered to cover countless miles with little maintenance and no complaint. They started as rigid machines very close to the wartime Matchless WD G3L, then switched to swinging arm suspension. The late 50s models with alternator lighting and half-



**1953 MATCHLESS G80**, basically original. Engine and frame belong together. Been standing for a long time and is a full restoration project. V5C document. The engine is most probably seized as it has stood for ages. I have not tried to turn it. Lucas magneto is in good working order with very nice spark. **SOLD FOR £2060**

decent brakes matched to fine handling are the most common, although the rigid-framed models have a considerable minimalist cachet. Also unusual although not particularly popular are the 1964-on versions, with their (relatively) short-stroke engine, Norton forks and wheels. Rigid fetch the highest prices, but spares for the later ones are easier. Very easy bike to live with; very few faults.

### Prices

low £2000 | high £2600 (CS comp models a lot more)

**Model 18 (Matchless G80)**  
498cc (82.5 x 93mm until 1963 then 86 x 85.5mm) ohv single  
400lb | 55mpg | 80mph | 1945-66

**THE 500 VERSION** of the very trad AMC single really is a bigger version of the 350, with a bit more of everything. Excellent riders' machines; classic in every way. They share almost all the components apart from the piston, flywheels, barrel and head with the smaller engine, which gives them a tendency to knock out some pattern big ends very quickly. However, this is not the problem it was, as the quality of AMC spares continues to

improve. This is a pleasant touring motorcycle, with good handling and comfort allied to a relaxed 60mph cruising speed. It's easy to convert a 350 single to a 500 as the strokes are the same, but to run smoothly they need the 500's flywheels too...

### Prices

low £2200 | high £4000  
(CS comp models a lot more)

**Model 20 (Matchless G9)**  
498cc (66 x 72.8mm) ohv twin  
410lb | 60mpg | 90mph | 1948-61

**AMC'S TWIN TOOK** a different path to the already established designs from BSA, Triumph, etc. So the engines are unusual, having a third main bearing between the cylinders, and separate barrels and cylinder heads. The engine is a notably clean design, with no external oil plumbing to spoil the lines and leak at the joints. It was never particularly popular with the sporting riders, although it was a handsome motorcycle and reliable enough. There were no rigid-framed or plunger-framed twins. Gradual development included the switch from a Burman gearbox to one of AMC's own design (aka the Norton gearbox, which went on to handle the power of the Commando!) in



**SOLD AS SEEN**



**1946 MATCHLESS G80**, recently restored, been stored since; will require a full check over and service. Started and ran fine around two year ago, but currently there is no spark. SORN. The bike is in very good condition.  
**SOLD FOR £4100**

1956. The 'jampot' rear suspension was replaced by Girling units the following year. This is a good, reliable conservative motorcycle. Late ones are rare and very good, with alternator electrics and excellent duplex frames. Early jampot models can have odd handling and poor brakes.

**Prices**  
low £2500 | high £4000

**Model 30 (Matchless G11)**  
593cc (72 x 72.8mm) ohv twin | 410lb | 60mpg | 90mph | 1956-58

**AS NORTON** (under AMC ownership) took their 500cc Dominator 88 and stretched it into the 600cc Dominator 99, so AMC stretched their own 500 twin, simply over-boring it a little to provide the extra capacity. This is the least common of the AMC twins, and the 600s have been described as the best model in the series. The sports (CS) version is very unusual, very handsome and will cost an easy £1000 more than an equivalent standard roadster, and the very rare CSR version may fetch even more.

**Prices**  
low £2500 | high £4000

**Model 31 (Matchless G12)**  
646cc (72 x 79.3mm) ohv twin | 430lb | 55mpg | 100mph | 1959-66

**THE MOST COMMON** AMC twin. The earliest models were plainly a

stroked stretch of the 600cc Model 30, and developed an over-exaggerated reputation for fragility. The early 650 crank was supposed to be delicate, but only the alternator versions, which carried the massive alternator rotor on a drive-side crankshaft extension, had problems. AMC responded by forging post-1960 cranks in a very tough nodular iron. The post '61 models are very sound, if slightly staid, machines. In common with the rest of the heavyweight range, they acquired Norton forks and wheels for 1964, along with 12V electrics. Again, genuine CS and CSR versions will hold 25% higher prices, but watch out for fakes.

**Prices**  
low £2500 | high £4500

**Matchless G15/45**  
749cc ohv twin | 430lb | 50mpg | 105mph | 1963

**CONSCIOUS OF THE** ever-growing demand – particularly in America – for more power, AMC stretched their engine out to 750cc and offered the Matchless G15/45 (there was no AJS equivalent) for sale in the US. It was strangely unsuccessful. Myth suggests that the engine was unreliable, vibratory and not very good, but repatriated bikes are very pleasant, beefy torque-deliverers, and sound in wind and limb. The idea of a 750 twin was resurrected in 1963-4, but the new model used the Norton Atlas engine to power a range of models collectively known as 'AMC hybrids'.

**Prices**  
low £6500 | high £9000, if you can find one

**Model 33 (Matchless G15)**  
745cc (73 x 89mm) ohv twin | 420lb | 45mpg | 110mph | 1964-68

**FOLLOWING THE SALES** failure of the G15/45, AMC dropped the donkey from their Norton Atlas 750 twin into an AJS / Matchless chassis to create the Matchless 750 twin. The result is a terrific motorcycle, far more rewarding to ride than the sum of its parts suggests it should be. The legendary Atlas shakes are much reduced in the hybrids, perhaps because the heavy lugged AMC frame absorbs more energy than the welded Norton featherbed. The 750 hybrids came in three forms, a 'Mk2' UK-style trad roadster, a 'CS' street scrambler version, and a 'CSR' café racer. Confusingly, the CS and CSR versions can be very similar, especially US-spec models. The AJS versions are very rare and therefore expensive.

The final hybrids used the same engine squeezed into the cycle parts of the Matchless G85CS scrambler, replacing that machine's ohv alloy 500 single, to produce the P11, P11A and Ranger 750, often badged as Nortons. These machines are addictive, rare, and highly sought-after and highly priced!

**Prices**  
low £6000 | high £8500

## ARIEL

**A**riel, who built their range of high quality machines in Selly Oak, Birmingham, were a part of the BSA group of companies, and the BSA influence became greater as the years rolled by. Their machines always had a carefully-crafted air of quality, with thoughtful styling and finish. The singles were conventional in design, strong and reliable performers with a solid competition heritage to complement their build quality. There are two twins; the 500, which is an Ariel design, and the 650 which is a lightly redesigned BSA A10. All Ariel machines used Burman gearboxes despite the increasing use of BSA Group components

in other areas, and they have a gloriously pre-war primary chaincase design, complete with a dry clutch running in its own external housing. Gear changes are typically Burman; slow but sure and silent if adjusted properly. The famous fours, with their cylinders arranged in a square and running two cranks, are some sort of pinnacle of British engineering, although they can be expensive to restore. The final flourish was the introduction of the Leader/Arrow range of 2-stroke twins, and when these were discontinued in '65, Ariel were no more. We will ignore the Ariel 3... Spares OK (one good specialist dealer, and the entirely excellent Owners' Club), apart from tinware.

In common with most other major manufacturers, Ariel entered the post-war world with a range of mostly rigid machines, but were a little ahead of the mainstream game in that they'd introduced their sprung frame just before WW2 on the Square Four. It was an unusual design, more clever than most. After the war, they offered rigid and springer frames, finally introducing their own excellent swinging arm frame in 1954.

**Colt**  
197cc ohv single | 270lb | 80mpg | 65mph | 1954-60

**A SMART LOOKING** utility single loosely based on BSA's C11 with added Arielness. A faintly unusual idea, as 250cc was a more popular capacity both for commuters and learner riders. Spares good for the engines; Ariel-specific parts less so.

**Prices**  
low £1500 | high £2500

**Leader**  
247cc 2-stroke twin | 330lb | 55mpg | 70mph | 1958-65

**A RADICAL CONCEPT;** a wholly enclosed, fully-faired touring motorcycle, with a range of accessories that almost defied description in the '50s. One of the few wholly original designs to emerge from the post-war British industry. Especially recommended to those who still enjoy leisurely lane cruising. The fairing is excellently effective, and the only real downside is the poor braking.



Check that the pressed-steel beam frame is not rotted, especially around the suspension pick-up points. Comfortable and clean.

### Prices

low £2200 ■ high £3200

### Arrow

247cc 2-stroke twin ■ 305lb, 55mpg ■ 1960-5

**A STRIPPED-DOWN** Leader, built to utilise spare capacity in the Ariel works, the odd-looking Arrow was smooth and fast by the standards of the time, although it was also smoky and underbraked. Also built as the Sports (or 'Golden') Arrow (20hp, 80mph) and finally as the 200 Arrow.

### Prices

low £2200 ■ high £3000

### NH (Red Hunter)

347cc ohv single ■ 365lb ■ 70mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1945-58

**A HANDSOME WORKING** single in the trad Brit mould. Few special virtues or vices. The unusual Anstey-link plunger models are unusual and interesting; the excellent swinging arm frame handles rather better. The single engines are all developments of a pre-war design, and their ancestry is plain to anyone who observes that their single oil pump is almost identical to that fitted to countless Triumph twins.

### Prices

low £2000 ■ high £3000

### VH (Red Hunter)

497cc ohv single ■ 375lb ■ 55mpg ■ 85mph ■ 1945-58

**A VERY SOUND** big banger, often with a beautiful maroon finish (like the rest of the 4-stroke range) and great reliability. Rigid models are always great to ride, though some consider the later swinging arm machines to be the best riders and the most oil-tight. HS (scrambles) and HT (Trials) comp versions are very highly sought after and highly priced as a result. Ariel's singles are still under-rated, too, and are more affordable than many others, despite their excellence on the road.

### Prices

low £2800 ■ high £4000

### VB

598cc sv single ■ 370lb ■ 50mpg ■ 60mph ■ 1945-58

**ONE OF THE** last of the sidevalve sloggers (along with BSA's M20 and M21); great reliability, massive charm and almost no performance. Like a lot of sidevalves, they offer an alternative experience to more common ohv singles. If you have a choice, go for the rigid, which boasts considerable character, the swinging arm model rather less so.

### Prices

low £2500 ■ high £4000

### KH (Fieldmaster)

498cc ohv twin ■ 390lb ■ 65mpg ■ 90mph ■ 1948-58

**SWEET TOURING TWIN** with a unique motor in standard Ariel cycle parts. Engine spares can be hard to find, and the bikes are quite a rare sight these days. The engine is unique to the model, and is unusual in having its pushrods at the outside corners of the block. The 1953-only all alloy KHA is the most rare and will cost more. Available with rigid, Anstey link plunger or swinging arm frames. The all-iron rigid twin is a particular charmer, not unlike Norton's iron twins in the way it rides.

### Prices

low £2500 ■ high £4500

### FH (Huntmaster)

648cc ohv twin ■ 400lb ■ 55mpg ■ 100mph ■ 1954-58

**SOLID TOURING 650** twin, with a BSA A10-based engine that retained the tractable, quiet iron cylinder head to its end. Probably the most usable Ariel twin because of the easy availability of engine spares, and upgradeable using any sporting BSA A10 components. A stylish but slightly more expensive alternative to an A10, entirely capable of long-distance two-up travel. However, like other Ariels, the tin bits are scarce. The brakes can be marginal, although they were deemed sufficient for sidecar use in their day.

### Prices

low £3000 ■ high £4500

### Square Four

997cc ohv four ■ 480lb ■ 45mpg ■ 100mph

**THE FAMOUS BRITISH** post-war four is a machine of immense appeal, considerable mechanical noise and great smoothness. Early models are supposedly prone to overheating, and the solo handling can be a little exciting at speed, not least because Ariel never put their swinging arm Four into production and the Anstey link plunger rear end can struggle with the weight and performance. The brakes can also struggle to cope with the speed and mass. For all that, the Squarier is a highly desirable and functional bike with a unique cachet.

### Prices

low £11000 ■ high £16000

## BSA

**A**t one time BSA were the largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world, and there are still fleets of the products of their Small Heath, Birmingham factory about. The BSA range was huge, covering all areas of road riding and competition, and was exported to just about everywhere. Many originally exported BSAs have been repatriated over the years, which keeps prices competitive. If you are a newcomer to the old bike world, then a BSA of some description could well be your best bet; they're significantly less expensive than equivalent Triumph and Norton models.

Active Owners Club, many spares suppliers with plenty of repro parts being made. BSA offered a wide range of machines; singles, twins and triples, as well as the once ubiquitous Bantam, probably the most famous small stoker of them all and an inexpensive way to play with straightforward mechanicals.

The BSA way was a path of steady development, and although they built models which were as rapid as any Triumph and handled as well as Nortons, Beezers were never rated so highly. BSA – a big concern which included Triumph – left the 1960s on top of the world, and entered the 1970s on a rapid slide to oblivion. Their dohc 350 twin was stillborn, and the radical new frame designs introduced in 1971 were largely ignored because they used the same old single and twin engines. Be careful when buying bikes from 1971-73; threadforms changed in a strange sequence, so parts which appear perfect for a particular bike might not fit at all. For example; all the unit single engines look similar, which they are, but they are not the same; they changed constantly and sometimes radically through the years. The failure and collapse of BSA is one of the saddest episodes in British industry. Always join the owners' club.



### 1959 ROYAL ENFIELD CONSTELLATION 700CC

**TWIN.** Ride or restore. Top end rebuilt, magneto reconditioned last year, 930 Amal concentric fitted at the same time, original Amal 10TT9 carb and new cables come with the bike. Electrics are all working. Original Smiths chronometric 150mph speedo. **SOLD FOR £3600**



## Bantam

174cc 2-stroke single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph || 1948-71

**THE MOST WIDELY-SOLD** of all BSAs, the Bantam (which was the one true learner bike of its day) is apparently immortal, being plentiful even today and having an excellent owners' club of its own. It began life in 1948 as the 123cc D1, grew to 148cc as the D3 in 1954 and to 174cc as the D5 in 1958. The one to look for is possibly the 1968-71 D14/4, which has four gears, smartish styling, good handling and general reliability. The ones to ignore are possibly the plunger-framed versions. All Bantams can be reliable and very economical to run provided that they are built properly. Spares are plentiful and cheap, and modern ignition systems and engine seals can transform them. An easy introduction to classic Brits, if not exactly exhilarating to ride.

## Prices

low £1200 || high £2000

## C10 (45-57), C11 (45-55), C12 (56-58)

249cc singles || 320lb || 75mpg || 55-65mph

**POST-WAR UTILITY** bikes, negligible go, stop and handling. Many consider them to be dull, although they provided stolid ride-to-work reliability for many thousands who could afford better than a bicycle. Some spares are hard to find, now, and BSA built these bikes to a price affordable by working class heroes of their day. Less sought-after than Bantams, which is a little mysterious.

## Prices

low £1400 || high £2100

## C15 Star

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1959-67

**REDESIGNED BASIC 250**, with neat but restrained streamlined styling and unit construction. Some suffered bottom end and ignition troubles; most just whined on and on, as the basic design was rugged enough. Massive numbers were sold, which meant that even in the 'classic' age they were so plentiful that they were often neglected. Buy with care,

1970s learner riders did terrible things to them. Sports version was the SS80, which was quicker and less reliable. C15T and C15S will cost more. Before paying a lot more for a T or an S, make sure they're genuine.

## Prices

low £1450 || high £2250

## C25 Barracuda

249cc ohv single || 330lb || 60mpg || 75mph || 1966-70

**RESTYLED C15 WITH** a bit more go at the expense of some reliability. Better suspension, lighting and braking were added, and they can be surprisingly charming – and quick-steering, as the later frames were increasingly based around those used on the off-road comp models. Became the B25 Starfire in '68. This is a better bet as it is more reliable and less vibratory following a mild detuning. Also sold as the Fleetstar for fleet users.

## Prices

low £1500 || high £2250

## B25SS

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

**THE LAST OF** the long C15-based series, with a new oil-bearing chassis and smart street scrambler clothes for BSA's final rescue attempt. Naming it the 'Gold Star 250' didn't help sales or credibility. Also called the B25 Victor and rebadged as the Triumph Trailblazer/Blazer SS. As with all 250s, these suffered from learner neglect, so buy carefully. Most spares are around, though quality can be extremely variable. The last are probably the best of all the BSA 250 singles.

## Prices

low £1500 || high £2800

## B31

348cc ohv single || 365lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-59

**TRAD BRIT SINGLE.** Often leaky and rattly but can run up very high mileages with very little maintenance. Find an early one with solid or plunger frame for greater agility and charm. They are faster and sweeter than later heavier examples. The 350 engine shared the same bicycle as far

bigger machines, and can be leisurely as a result, especially the swinging arm bikes. The last models, with their coil ignition and alternator electrics, should be worthwhile contenders for anyone who wants to ride regularly.

## Prices

low £1800 || high £2800

## B32 Gold Star

348cc ohv single || 360lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1949-57

**AMAZING WHAT A** name and reputation can do for prices. Souped-up single with a flashy suit and better brakes than lesser models. The DB32 is the one to buy with its excellent duplex frame, although the price is high. Spares availability and quality are excellent, and owners' club support is guaranteed. Check paperwork closely: look on old documents for evidence that it has always been a Goldie and isn't an over-priced replica.

## Prices

low £4500 || high £7500

## B40

343cc ohv single. 305lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1960-65

**STRETCHED C15, WITH** more torque and a cast-in pushrod tunnel to distinguish it. Never wildly popular, they are nonetheless sound and usually reliable if treated kindly. Plenty of ex-WD bikes about. These are better bets, with good off-road type frames, an unusual set of gear ratios and better oil filters included. The sports SS90 version is very rare now.

## Prices

low £1750 || high £2400

## B44 Victor

441cc ohv single || 335lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1966-70

**ANOTHER C15 STRETCH** with more go and more vibration. Engines can be fragile if abused, despite Jeff Smith scrambles heritage. Also sold as the Shooting Star, not to be confused with the twin of the same name.

## Prices

low £2200 || high £3000

## B33

499cc ohv single || 420lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1947-59

**ENLARGED B31, WITH** more torque so longer legs. Possibly the classic '50s workhorse, this one will run and run. Plunger suspension from 1949, then the admirable BSA swinging arm frame arrived in 1955. Alternator/coil ignition in 1958. Similar values for the M33, which is essentially an ohv (B33) engine in a sidevalve (M21) bicycle. All extremely straightforward to maintain and easy to live with: a solid bet for any beginner.

## Prices

low £2200 || high £3200

## B34, DB34, DBD34, Gold Star

499cc ohv single || 410lb || 55mpg || 110mph || 1950-62

**THE LEGEND ITSELF.** Fun on the open road, but antisocial and awkward in traffic. Vastly overpriced due to a vast over-reputation, which masks their charm from many newer riders. Rewarding to own and to learn to ride properly. Spares and club support are excellent. Beware of fakes; buy from someone you trust, and always with a warranty. Superb specialist services and updated, uprated components are readily available, mostly intended to boost performance.

## Prices

low £12000 || high £20000

## B50SS

499cc ohv single || 340lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1971-72

**THE LAST OF** the C15 stretches. Striking street-scrambler style fails to disguise the overstressed power train. Also known as the B50 Gold Star and B50T Victor. Conversion to electronic ignition can transform it to one of GB's best ever singles, although starting it is a definite skill, and kickbacks can be killers. The most amazing exhaust system in the world on the US-only Triumph-badged version. Agile and quick, regular oil changes and a fully-charged battery are essential.

## Prices

low £2700 || high £4000



## M20

496cc sv single ■ 425lb ■ 55mpg ■ 65mph ■ 1945-55

### ONCE UBIQUITOUS

**ANTIQUATED** sidevalve slogger, kept in production by WD contracts and sidecar hauliers like the AA. Little go and little stop but very rugged and oozing character. Stretched to 591cc in 1946 (as the M21, until 1963), with similar performance but greater thirst for both petrol and oil.

### Prices

low £2200, high £3200

## A7

497cc ohv twin ■ 420lb ■ 55mpg ■ 90mph ■ 1946-61

**SPLENDID TWIN, WITH** smooth power and typically fine BSA steering. Early models may be more sought after, but post-1950 bikes, with A10-based engines are better for spares. Immense reliability and charm. Recommended to anyone who enjoys motorcycling off the M-ways. Started out as a rigid, gained a redesigned engine and a plunger frame, was later redesigned again to fit into the swinging arm frame. Iron-engined rigids are especially fine. Only fault is the dismal 6V lighting but that's hardly unique to BSA and is fixable with modern components, as is the magneto ignition. A7SS Shooting Star is the sporty one with similar go and a higher price.

### Prices

low £2400 ■ high £3500

## A50 Royal Star

499cc ohv twin ■ 420lb ■ 60mpg ■ 90mph ■ 1962-66

### UNIT-CONSTRUCTION

**REPLACEMENT** for the A7. A fine if slightly sluggish machine with all the style of the 650s but with less go and less vibes. Smoother, though, and the rare sporting versions are highly entertaining. Bargains can be found and they make good working bikes. 12V alternator electrics and seriously simple maintenance make them entirely practical riding machines. The engines shouldn't leak and they shouldn't rattle, but they often do...

### Prices

low £2000 ■ high £3700

## A10

646cc ohv twin ■ 440lb ■ 55mpg ■ 105mph ■ 1951-63

**A CLASSIC IN** more than just name, the A10 was sold as the Golden Flash with flash style, the Road Rocket with a bit more go, and as the Super Rocket with a little more than that. Many plunger Flashes spent their working lives hauling sidecars and may still lean in that direction. The A10 engine in BSA's swinging arm frame is arguably one of the best postwar Britbikes: robust and easy to ride a long way, if less rapid than the Triumph alternative. The Rocket Gold Star was a super-sports version with Gold Star cycle parts and tuned engine. These can fetch £20,000 but are highly fakeable, so be very careful. An A10 is a fine motorcycle; the only worry can be high-speed braking on the later models. SRM main bearing conversion is a plus when looking to buy.

### Prices

low £2700 ■ high £5000 ■ RGS low £7500 ■ high £15000

## A65

654cc ohv twin ■ 425lb ■ 55mpg ■ 120mph ■ 1962-73

### THE UNIT-CONSTRUCTION

replacement for the A10. The A65 has a poor reputation as a vibrator and a leaker of oil, which means that they make good buys for riders. Get one while you can! In fact, the single-carb twins are no more rough than any others. Spares are plentiful, if of unusually variable quality. Late (post '71) bikes have the same oil-bearing frames as 71-83 Triumph twins and which provide fine steering. Very late (1972) bikes are very good indeed, and are hard to fault as practical bikes – they even stopped leaking after the '71 redesign. Sold as the Thunderbolt (tourer), Lightning (sports), Spitfire (café racer) and Firebird Scrambler (street scrambler). Problems tend to be electrical and easily fixed. Specialist engineering sorts suspect bottom end oiling, as in all BSA twins.

### Prices

low £2500 ■ high £4500

## A70 Lightning

751cc ohv twin ■ 425lb ■ 50mpg ■ 120mph ■ 1971

US-ONLY HOMOLOGATION



**1976 TRIUMPH T160 TRIDENT**, 5-speed electric start. Wiring and wiring sorted and a starter motor fitted (works fine), shows 6000 miles. 3 into 1 exhaust sounds great. UK registered, MoT April, new front disc, runs and rides fine starts kick or button. **SOLD FOR £5350**

special, intended for Stateside racing. Very rare – beware the imitator! These unusual engines were once popular with heroic chair racers. Spares are hard to find, and they're no faster on the road than the 650.

### Prices

High - if you find one.

## A75R Rocket 3

740cc ohv triple ■ 520lb ■ 35mpg ■ 125mph ■ 1968-72

**ARGUABLY THE FIRST** superbike, the Rocket 3 was quite a sensation when launched, with its vivid acceleration, unconventional styling, high top speed and excellent steering. The bikes are in great demand, and can be expensive to run, although parts supply is good from several expert and specialist suppliers. Rewarding to own and ride, and can accept the disc brake and electric starter from the T160 Trident. Fascinating machines. They share an excellent owners' club with Triumph's Tridents.

### Prices

low £6500 ■ high £10,000

## DOUGLAS

**T**he small Bristol manufacturer which always seemed to be in financial difficulty, but which produced some interesting boxer twins with variable production quality. Despite the BMW-like across the frame flat twin design, with the crank's axis in line with the frame's

centreline, Douglas turned the drive through 90-degrees and used a chain final drive rather than a shaft – unlike Velocette's flat twins. Their bikes are relatively rarely offered for sale outside of the owners' club which is the only reliable source of spares.

## Mark Series

348cc ohv flat twin ■ 340lb ■ 65mpg ■ 75mph

**HARD TO FIND** for sale, even harder to find on the road. Fine handling for their day, but a little fragile in the power dept. Once called 'the Bugatti of motorcycles'. The engineering is innovative, with their own take on suspension at both ends, including a truly unusual reliance upon torsion bars. The engines are sweet, smooth and gentle. Avoid the initial (teething troubled) T35 model. The Mk3 Sports is the acknowledged one to have; 80-Plus and 90-Plus sporting versions are faster and boast better brakes for a frighteningly high price.

### Prices

low £3500 ■ high £5500

## Dragonfly

348cc ohv flat twin ■ 395lb ■ 55mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1954-57

**ODDLY STYLED TOURING** 350 twin, featuring Earles forks and a faired headlamp / petrol tank, as well as conventional rear suspension. An involving, unusual machine with a rev-happy engine providing almost adequate



performance and with excellent steering, but dire brakes and limited specialist support.

**Prices**  
low £3000 || high £5000

## FRANCIS-BARNETT

**P**art of the AMC group, F-B built sturdy and plodding 2-strokes using both the Piatti-designed AMC engine and the better Villiers unit in a variety of capacities and styles. Not at present very highly-regarded by the classic crowd, F-Bs are cheap enough to provide a lot of fun in the old bike milieu, and are reliable if looked after. Models to look out for include the amazingly styled Fulmar, which has a small AMC engine to propel its unusual frame, leading link front forks and swoopy bodywork slowly along, and the Cruiser twins (89 and 91), which have almost acceptable performance. Prices for the whole range are similar and low. Owners Clubs (their own, as well as the British Two-Stroke); scarce spares, apart from for the Villiers engines.

**Prices**  
low £850 || high £1250

## GREEVES

**B**uilt in Thundersley, Essex, the Greeves range of lightweight, competition-based machines were always a bit different from the more mundane commuter bikes with which they shared the use of Villiers engines. The most striking features are the alloy beam-based frame and leading-link forks which used rubber in torsion as the spring medium. Any bike which could be described as 'off-road' will command a higher price, but the roadster models, using both Villiers singles and twin engines, can provide superb steering, some style and a little performance. Silverstone road-racers are highly coveted by both collectors and riders, while the less than subtle East Coaster is the Ed's personal favourite.

**Prices**  
low £2000 || high £2750

## HESKETH

**L**aunched at a wondering world as yet another Great British world-beater, Lord Hesketh's monster V-twin turned out to be an expensive flop, largely because the splendid-looking power unit was inadequately

developed and lacked the sophistication required by those spending around £6000 on a motorcycle. It was also panned by the Press, although at least one of CBG's team likes them. Production of a sort dribbled on for years, including a suggested re-launch using more modern suspension and brakes as well as a bigger version of the original engine. There are still a few low mileage examples about which could make sense, especially if they have been up-dated with the EN10 kit of improved engine parts. Spares supply mostly excellent. The current Hesketh concern is intent upon launching a new range of V-twins using a proprietary powerplant rather than their own.

**V1000**  
992cc dohc V-twin || 560lb || 35mpg || 120mph || 1982-84

**ALSO SOLD AS** the Vampire with a striking full enclosure, the unfaired V1000 is let down by a noisy engine, a stiff gearchange and a very tall riding position. The rest of the machine is pretty good, using the best parts from European suppliers of the day, and most of the faults can be eliminated with redesigned parts developed by Mick Broom. Many of the criticisms come from those who've never ridden one, and those who ride them usually like them.

**Prices**  
low £10000 || high £14000

## JAMES

**T**he other AMC 2-stroke builder, probably most well-known for their Cadet and Captain commuters, which were very dull indeed. Once again, the better buys are those which are powered by Villiers rather than Piatti-designed AMC engines, and the very late (1966) Superswift twin is probably the one to find. Some machines were built with the Villiers 4T unit, which is a little less slow. The James Scooter (which was sold as the Matchless Papoose in the US!) is the one to avoid – unless you truly are a

collector of lost causes. However, a lot of low-cost, high-amusement riding can be had from any of the James range, and they can't depreciate much. Like most British 2-strokes, they have a dedicated band of expert fans.

**Prices**  
low £850 || high £1500

## MATCHLESS

**T**he once-famous marque was offered a new lease of life from a new home in Newton Abbot in Devon. Only one model was offered; a Rotax-engined 500cc single, either with or without electric start, and with a second front brake disc to handle the power of the electric start (a joke). The frame, designed by Triumph engineer Brian Jones, is oil-bearing, light and neat. Many spares are available from either the company (LF Harris) or from Rotax. The G80 suffered from over-pricing, sadly, and didn't do well.

**G80**  
499cc ohc single || 390lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1987-90

**EARLY STARTING AND** finish problems would appear to have been overcome on the later bikes, and the G80 makes a pleasant, practical, comfortable classic styled bike for everyday use. If you have a choice, opt for the electric start and twin front discs and accept that you'll pay more for one of those.

**Prices**  
low £2000 || high £4000

## NORTON

**A**n AMC company from 1953, Norton moved from their Birmingham base to the London AMC works in 1963 as part of the parent company's struggle to stay afloat. They built a wide range of machines including sidevalve sloggers, ohc singles and ohv twins. Famously better roadholding than the Triumph competition although many riders prefer the Triumph's perky power delivery; always more expensive than BSA, AJS



**TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE T120TT.** Great barn find. Engine case does not match the frame, the top end maybe original 67 spec. Aside from a few items this is an original bike, carbs are TT spec, 389/95 monoblocs w/66 date, very minor surface rust in the tank, sidestand lug is broken off. **SOLD FOR £4200**



or Matchless equivalents. Following the AMC crash of '66, the new Norton Villiers concern concentrated on twins, launching the Commando in 1967 and relying on variants on this theme until production ceased in 1977. A revived successor company produced several hundred twin-rotor Wankel engined machines between 1983 and 1992, which have become accepted as classics despite their strangeness. The modern range of 961 Commandos is still current, so not considered here, yet. Spares supply is excellent for the classic twins, reasonable for the singles; likewise for the rotaries despite the demise of the factory. An excellent owners' club, who supply an increasing range of obscure spares.

### Jubilee

249cc ohv twin | 350lb | 75mpg | 65mph | 1958-66

**WELL-DESIGNED** but underdeveloped and sometimes poorly assembled unit construction twin engine in AMC group lightweight chassis. Suffered from oil leaks, mechanical disasters and the Wipac electrical bits. Deluxe version looks smart if you like skirts. The James-style forks and wheels deny cred from an otherwise interesting machine. The unit construction lightweight twin engine is in intriguing design; easy to work on, and should be robust, with its huge main and big end bearings. Oddly, its reputation is less than that.

### Prices

low £1700 | high £2300

### Navigator

349cc ohv twin | 350lb | 65mpg | 75mph | 1960-65

**ENLARGED AND MORE** useful Jubilee with Roadholder forks and an 8" front brake. Enough performance for cruising the byways and excellent handling. Expensive (for a lightweight) but wieldy and manageable. Handsome too, in a baby-Dommi way, and quick enough, if not fast.

### Prices

low £2000 | high £2800

### Electra

394cc ohv twin | 360lb | 55mpg | 75mph | 1963-65

**RARE ELECTRIC START** version of the Navigator with a few more ccs and indicators. The best of the lightweights and pretty civilised for 1963. Provided the electrical system's in decent condition, the starter is reliable enough too. Light and agile, with great steering and stopping. It even has indicators.

### Prices

low £2000 | high £3500

### Model 50

348cc ohv single | 400lb | 75mpg | 75mph | 1956-63

**GENTLE TRAD BRIT** single with nice manners and gentle performance. Post '59 models are the most expensive, with the famous featherbed frame, decent lights and good looks, but the earlier non-featherbed machines are charming, much cheaper and have a better riding position. Very few survive, most were turned into Tritons...

### Prices

low £2500 | high £4500

### Model 40

349c ohc single | 340lb | 65mpg | 85mph. 1946-58

**FUSSY CAMSHAFT SINGLE**, aka the International, a distant roadgoing relative of the racing Manx models. Featherbed bikes are best, but ludicrously expensive. Experts are out there; identifying them is rarely easy. Parts are available, but are never wallet-friendly.

### Prices

low £20000 | high £30000

### 16H

490cc sv single | 365lb | 55mpg | 65mph | 1945-55

**MOST UN-NORTON-LIKE** slogger with less performance than a modern 125. They do have much charm though, and some riders prefer them to BSA's equivalent M20, which was also a favourite with WW2 soldier DRs. Used to be found with chair attached and completely worn out, now usually observed at military revivalist meetings.

### Prices

low £2450 | high £4000



**1966 TRIUMPH T120R 650 BONNEVILLE.** Matching numbers, a good restoration project. Starts with a couple of kicks, sounds good and strong. Wheel rims are not bad, tank is good. seat and seat pan in good nick. Oil pumps round when running, wiring a bit micky mouse, non original coils on, battery is good, Duty has been paid. **SOLD FOR £4200**

### Model 18 / ES2

490cc ohv single | 380lb | 60mpg | 75mph | 1947-62

**NORTON'S TRAD BRIT** single. An average performer in all areas until the featherbed frame gave it brilliant handling for 1959. Again, it's a pleasant bike, but a lot of the late ones were converted into Tritons. Opinion suggests that they are one of the best British singles. The Model 18 (1945-54) is essentially the plunger ES2 less the plungers; ie. it retained the earlier rigid frame but used the Roadholder front end.

### Prices

low £3200 | high £4800

### ES2 Mk2 & Model 50 Mk2.

964-66

### MATCHLESS MACHINES WITH

Norton badges and bearing no resemblance to 'real' ES2s. Built for some odd marketing reason for a short time prior to the AMC collapse. Very rare now; price as AJS 350/500, plus invisible rarity factor.

### Model 7

497cc ohv twin | 413lb | 60mpg | 90mph | 1948-52

**AN UNUSUAL NORTON** twin, with a gentle iron-head version of the Dominator twin engine in a plunger bicycle similar to that of the ES2. Handling nowhere near featherbed class, but an interesting and comfortable machine. Debatable whether it's really worth

any more than the equivalent BSA A7, but always priced higher.

### Prices

low £3000 | high £4500

### 88

497cc ohv twin | 420lb | 60mpg | 90mph | 1951-66

### THE FIRST FEATHERBED-FRAMED

roadster twin and a fine motorcycle. Brilliant steering, excellent brakes and smooth (if a little noisy) motor make for a good time. Frame layout can produce leg-ache after a long run. Also available as the 88SS, which had twin carbs, a siamesed exhaust and was quite quick.

### Prices

low £5000 | high £7500

### Model 30 (International)

490cc ohc single | 360lb | 60mpg | 95mph | 1946-58

**CAMMY SPORTS SINGLE** which offered similar performance to the 88 twin but required much more effort to achieve it. Good looks, class and oil leaks fail to justify the incredible prices. Camshaft kudos is invaluable, however.

### Prices

low £14500 | high £25000

### Model 19

596cc ohv single | 385lb | 60mpg | 70mph | 1955-57

**MONSTER 600 SINGLE** for the



**SOLD AS SEEN**



**1961 TRIUMPH TIGRESS SCOOTER**, original log book. Repainted a few years ago but still looks brilliant. Stainless steel exhaust, seat recovered. Pushed it into the garden for the photos, kicked it a few times and it was running. Sounds OK. Could do with a new battery.  
**UNSOLD AT £1630**

chair pullers with little to commend it except rarity. Suffix 'S' stands for Sprung (not Sports, silly) and 'R' for Rigid. Very long stroke engine makes it a master at climbing mountains as well as hard to start.

## Prices

low £3000 || high £3700

## Big 4

596cc sv single || 400lb || 50mpg || 65mph || 1947-54

**PRE-WAR RELIC** intended to haul vast loads great distances very slowly. Overpriced by the name on the tank. Rare spares.

## Prices

low £3000 || high £4500

## Model 77

**RARE TWIN; BASICALLY** a 99 engine in a non-featherbed swinging arm bicycle very similar to the same-year ES2. Comfortable, calm bike to ride, and intended mainly for sidecar use. US riders could buy the Nomad, a desert sled version of this machine with great styling and better performance.

## Prices

low £3500 || high £4500 (Nomad a lot more)

## 99

596cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1956-62

**STRETCHED 88 WITH** a little more speed and vibration. One of

the best of the entire Dominator series. Shared the same cycle parts as the other featherbed twins and developed with them. Single carb, gained an alternator in 1958 and the slimmer slimline featherbed in 1959.

## Prices

low £5500 || high £7500

## 650SS / Mercury

646cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1960-69

**STRETCHED 99 WITH** better performance, greater vibration and the slimline featherbed chassis. Very fast but harsh with it. The final featherbed twin was the Mercury, built alongside the Commando until 1969 with a single carb, light mudguarding and no tachometer. Possibly the most pleasant featherbed twin.

## Prices

low £5000 || high £6500

## Atlas

745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1963-68

**STRETCHED 650 WITH** no more go but plenty of vibes. Huge amount of torque makes for a very relaxed cruiser, but vibration spoils the thrill of the acceleration. Still a good bike, and rewarding to ride, although much overshadowed by the Commando in the classic era.

## Prices

low £5000 || high £6500

## N15

745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1964-68

**NORTON ATLAS ENGINE** in a Matchless chassis and off-road clothes makes for a wild early trail bike. Mainly sold in the US as 'desert sleds'. Loads of noise, vibes, excitement. Strangely, the Atlas engine shakes rather less in the Matchless's lugged frame than in Norton's all-welded featherbed.

## Prices

low £5500 || high £7500

## P11/P11A / Ranger 750

745cc ohv twin || 400lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1965-69

**DEFINITIVE US DESERT** racer, with the Atlas lump in Matchless G85 CS scrambler cycle parts making a beast of a bike. Very rare and very fine street scrambler.

## Prices

low £7000 || high £9000

## Commando

745cc ohv twin || 450lb || 55mpg || 125mph || 1968-73  
828cc ohv twin || 450lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1973-77

**THE LAST STRETCH** of the Dominator engine. The increasing vibration was tamed by the Isolastic rubber frame mounts, at the expense of some steering precision. Early versions used what was basically an Atlas engine; the 850 was much more refined, less prone to oil loss and less rapid. Sold as Fastback (with unusual styling), Roadster LR (bigger tank), 'S' (high pipes and small tank), HiRider (bizarre custom thing), Interstate (vast tanked tourer), John Player Special (fake racer) and as a real proddie racer. 1975 brought us the Mk3, complete with a single disc brake at each end and an electric start. This was the butt of much humour at the time, but modern replacement starter motors cure it. Possibly the best Brit twin, certainly a genuine British superbike, with all the charm of the big engine without the vibration. Spares supply is excellent: endless opportunities to upgrade engine and ancillaries. Superb owners' club.

## Prices

low £4500 || high £8500

## Classic

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-89

## THE FIRST CIVILIAN

rotary Norton. Neat traditional style and unique performance. One hundred and one built and sold. Check that it really is a Classic and not a re-upholstered police Interpol 2.

## Prices

low £7000 || high £11000

## Interpol 2

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1983-88

**THE MOST COMMON** of the rotary series. Built for police and fleet use, the spine frame and ultra-smooth rotary engine, allied to a BMW RT-style fairing, fully enclosed drive chain and hard Craven-type panniers produced an excellent touring machine. All rotaries depend on informed maintenance. Modern ignition systems and lubricants liberate them from their early unreliability. Marzocchi forks and Brembo brakes add to the riding pleasure. Buy with care, or budget for a specialist rebuild before use.

## Prices

low £4000 || high £5500

## Commander

588cc l/c twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-93

**NORTON REPLACED THE** air-cooled Interpol 2 with the more refined liquid-cooled Commander. Built in parallel for fleet / police use and the civilian market, it replaced the Italian components of the IP2 with running gear from Yamaha's XJ900. Excellent fairing, and twin batteries to provide confidence for private users as well as major electricals for the police. Early machines offered only non-removable hard panniers, while the last ones were fitted with detachable Krauser items. Buy with care; rotary engines respond badly to neglect but are fast and reliable when properly set up.

## Prices

low £5000 || high £7500



**F1**  
588cc twin rotary | 162kg |  
32mpg | 135mph, 1990-92

If you want to preserve for posterity, buy an original F1, if you want to ride a bike, buy the later F1 Sport. Water-cooled rotormotor with Yamaha gearbox in exotic alloy beam chassis and staggering styling. Overheated in traffic, but brilliant to ride. Superb handling and considerable rapidity. Buy a bike only with a known history and preferably a service record.

**Prices**  
low £14000 | high £18000

## PANTHER

Built by Phelon and Moore in Cleckheaton, Yorkshire, Panther motorcycles inspire huge loyalty in their owners and seem to spur them on to incredible feats. As well as the galaxy-spanning big slopers, P&M built a range of lighter 4-stroke singles and a range of 2-stroke lightweights powered by the ubiquitous Villiers engines and featuring Earles forks. They also imported the Terrot scooter in a vain tilt at the scooter market. Panthers have little performance but great charm. Active and completely eccentric Owners Club. Spares OK.

**Models 65/75**  
248/348cc ohv singles |  
340/350lb | 75/65mpg |  
63/72mph | 1947-62

A PAIR OF very traditional British singles with a pedigree dating back to Boadicea at least. Rugged, simple, immortal and distinctly non-sporting, they were equipped with about the best tele-forks to have been made in Britain; Dowty's 'Oleomatic' (pump-up, air-sprung) units. Worth a ride for these alone.

**Prices**  
low £1750 | high £2500

**Model 100**  
598cc ohv single | 440lb | 60mpg  
| 75mph | 1946-63

INTENDED AS A chairpuller, and looking quite odd without one, they have immense reliability, leak hugely and run on for years. Built

for durability rather than looks. Supremely charming to own. One of Brit biking's great characters.

**Prices**  
low £3000 | high £5000

**Model 120**  
646cc ohv single | 440lb | 55mpg  
| 80mph | 1959-65

ENLARGED BUT LITTLE different. 'Notably more troubled than the Model 100' said noted historian Steve Wilson. Some spares are very rare, but the owners' club can usually help.

**Prices**  
low £2800 | high £4000

## ROYAL ENFIELD

From their Redditch works, RE built a respectable range of staid singles and twins which were at one time mostly famous for their inability to retain their oil. They listed two ranges of singles, one based on the Bullet and the other on the unit-construction Crusader. There was also a rather nice Villiers powered 250, the Turbo Twin, which is very rare. The twins came in 500, 700 and 750 capacities, arguably the best of which were the late Interceptors, which have Norton forks and front wheel and go as well as they look. All heavy models used the Albion gearbox, which was out-dated by 1956 and can be slow through the gears with an odd neutral-finder lever to play with. Spares for most models are very good, with much interchange between Brit-built Bullets and their Indian descendants.

**Clipper**  
248cc ohv single | 350lb | 85mpg  
| 60mph | 1953-57

GENTLE AND RARE. Even rose-tinted retro-vision doesn't help much with the performance.

**Prices**  
low £1750 | high £2200

**Crusader**  
248cc ohv single | 330lb | 75mpg  
| 75mph | 1956-66

UNIT CONSTRUCTION SINGLE with good handling and oil leaks. Also offered with a 5-speed gearbox (the Super 5) which had something of a reputation for unreliability.

**Prices**  
low £1750 | high £2500

**Continental**  
248cc ohv single | 320lb | 65mpg  
| 80mph | 1962-67

RESTYLED VERSION OF the 5-speed Crusader, with more waft, vibration and oil leaks. Odd semi-racer styling on the GT model.

**Prices**  
low £2200 | high, £3000

**Bullet**  
346cc ohv single | 365lb | 70mpg  
| 70mph | 1949-63

ENFIELD'S RATHER UNDER-RATED version of the trad Brit single, distinguished by intriguing detail design. Less common 500 version with more torque is perhaps

a better machine, but both steer extremely well. British-built Bullets much more valued than Indian ones.

**Prices**  
low £2000 | high £4000

**Meteor Minor**  
496cc ohv twin | 420lb | 60mpg |

85mph | 1959-63

DEVELOPED FROM THE rare '500 Twin', the small RE twin is a much under-rated machine which goes and handles very well, although some spares can be elusive.

**Prices**  
low £2500 | high £3200

**Bullet / Electra / Continental**  
499cc ohv single | 390lb | 80mpg  
| 80mph | 1955-present

PRODUCTION OF BULLETS continued in Chennai, India, long after it ended in Blighty. Quality dubious until mid-1990s, incremental improvements since then. Official UK bikes always built to a better standard than grey imports. Electra-X came with lean-burn engine and five-speed gearbox. Fuel-injection and unit construction from 2007. Latest version boosted to 535cc for café racer Continental GT model. Heaps of choice, great value, excellent spares supply and enthusiast suppliers.

**Prices**  
low £1500 | high £3000

**Super Meteor**  
692cc ohv twin. 430lb | 55mpg |  
100mph | 1952-60

ANOTHER UNDER-RATED twin, with good manners and excellent ▶



**TRIUMPH TRIDENT T160V.** Frame and engine numbers match, all new parts for the gearbox, sourced. NOS casings. Frame sprayed by Black Shuck Customs in Norwich; superb. Loosely bolted together. The could do with a re-spray to match the frame's quality. No V5.  
**SOLD FOR £3045**



rideability. Very good tourer. Developed into the Constellation for 1959, with better styling, better handling, less reliability and 110mph || Try one and be (pleasantly) surprised.

**Prices**  
low £2500 || high £3500

**Constellation/Interceptor Mk 1**  
692/736cc ohv twin || 435lb || 110mph || 1958-68

**A RACE-BRED SPORTS**  
development of the Super Meteor. Very fast but earned a deserved reputation for fragility and external lubrication. The later and larger Interceptor Mk 1 was a little better.

**Prices**  
low £3000 || high £4500

**Interceptor Mk2**  
736cc ohv twin. 442lb, 112mph, 1968-70

**A SERIOUS CONTENDER** for Britain's best-ever big (parallel) twin. A super redesign of the old engine lifted it into the near-bulletproof bracket. Crushingly handsome good looks, good handling and an immense power spread, no oil leaks. Norton forks and front brake are very effective, and the only let-down is the gearbox, which has a chasm between 3rd and top. The Rickman-framed offspring is sheer magic, but it was all too late to stop RE from going under.

**Prices**  
low £4000 || high £7500

## SCOTT

Made post-war in Birmingham by the Aero Jig and Tool Company, who took over production from the Shipley factory and compromised the long-established specification with sophistication that just seemed to add weight. An intriguing mix of old and almost modern with sweet manners if you're not in a great hurry. Always remember that all Scott engines are 2-stroke twins and are not like any other engine you'll have encountered before. Only ever

buy one from someone you trust and who knows what they're selling. Fascinating machines, with ingenious solutions to problems you didn't know existed.

**Squirrel**  
596cc 2-str. twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1947-mid 60s

**QUIRKY, TORQUEY, AND** for the individualist only. Unique. Absorbing to own and rewarding to ride.

**Prices**  
low £4500 || high £6500

## SUNBEAM

The Sunbeam name was acquired by BSA (from AMC) during WW2 and was relaunched in '46 as an upmarket tourer. Sadly, the S7/S8 series machines were never fully developed and sales were disappointing. Most wearing spares available from one major and expert source. Clever engineering, well made and a true alternative to all other British 500cc parallel twins.

**S7/S8**  
490cc ohc in-line twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1946-57

**INTENDED AS THE** ideal touring motorcycle, with a rubber mounted, unit construction, understressed power unit, driving via a shaft. Comfortable and handsome but the S7 was let down by sluggish performance and ponderous handling. The S8 looked slimmer, with its BSA front forks and brake, and steered a little better. Something of an heroic failure. Always worth consideration if style is more important than speed.

**Prices**  
low £3600 || high £5000

## TRIUMPH

These chaps started the British obsession with parallel twins just before the 1939-45 war and kept them in production until 1988 (latterly at the LF Harris works in Devon), before John Bloor began again at

Hinckley. The excellent availability of spares for most of the post-war models makes them very popular with riders in the classic world, and they are indeed very practical and plentiful bikes. Huge numbers of US-spec Bonnies and Tridents have come back from the States, along with quantities of NOS spares. Triumphs are often mechanically noisy, and with less than perfect steering on the '50s and early-'60s twins. Triumph also built some oddly pleasant scooters – they're really alternative! Spares supply is ample (but quality variable); the owners' club is active and enthusiastic, and both twins and triples have benefitted greatly from modern re-engineered components. If you absolutely must have a Triumph then you'll happily pay the price premium which the badge commands: but if you started here simply because it's a familiar name then go look at BSAs for a softer entry to classic Brits. Early Hinckley Triumphs have achieved 'classic' status already: look out for them in a future issue.

**Tiger Cub**  
199cc ohv single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph

**DEVELOPED FROM THE** earlier 150cc Terrier, the Tiger Cub was a great learner bike of its day. Sold in off-road form as well as roadster, many have also been converted for use in pre-65 trials. Some suffered from weird wiring and weak brakes and big end. The late ones are best, with the BSA Bantam rolling chassis. Massively popular, and priced way beyond their performance.

**Prices**  
low £2000 || high £5000

**TR25, Blazer SS**  
249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

**A NEAT STREET** scrambler based around the BSA B25, which is identical bar the styling and badges. Don't be put off by their poor reputation; used sensibly, with frequent oil changes, they can be fun and practical to ride. Triumphs appear to fetch higher prices than BSA, oddly. The oil-bearing frame is

excellent; two different front brakes were used, both can be made to work well. Earlier TR25W Trophy is as uninspired as the BSA Starfire, which it really is.

**Prices**  
low £1750 || high £2500

**3TA**  
348cc ohv twin || 360lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1957-68

**ALSO CALLED THE** 21 (21 cu in = 350cc), this was the first unit-construction Triumph || Bizarre 'bathtub' rear end styling makes them stand out; odd handling, feeble brakes and occasional sparks make you wonder why they sold so well. Sporty version was the Tiger 90, which was nicer and lasted a year longer.

**Prices**  
low £2750 || high £3650

**5T Speed Twin**  
498cc ohv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1946-57

**EARLY POST-WAR** models have weak forks and brakes, copious leaks, rattles and poor roadholding. No wonder they sold well! Avoid anything with a sprung hub if you enjoy riding rapidly. Engine is sweet and willing, however, and just a few miles will reveal the reason for the enduring popularity of Triumph's twins.

**Prices**  
low £3500 || high £5000

**Tiger 100**  
498cc ohv twin || 370lb || 60mpg || 100mph || 1946-57

**SPORTS VERSION OF** the 5T, with same comments and more performance. The all alloy engine is a rattler, but is a mover – it's a shame so many ended up in Tritons and Tribsas. Riding an early s/arm model can be (a little too) exciting, though the off-road models are simply superb.

**Prices**  
low £4000, high £5800

**5TA**  
498cc ohv twin || 385lb || 50mpg || 85mph || 1958-66

**UNIT CONSTRUCTION REPLACEMENT** for the 5T, with



'bathtub' rear enclosure, puny frame and a monster front mudguard. Crisp engine, interesting handling at speed. The engine is faster than the frame; excitement guaranteed. The T100A was the first unit Tiger 100; looked more like a motorcycle, and lasted until '61. It was followed by the T100SS (1962-65), the T100 (1966), took a great leap forward to become the T100S (1967-70) and the T100T (1967-70) with a quicker motor. This became the T100C (1971-72) and finally the T100R Daytona (1971-73). Later models are usually better. Original bathtub enclosures are now very hard to find (riders of the time did the wise thing and binned them) although remanufactured items surface every so often. Practical fun bikes.

**Prices**  
low £2500 || high £4500

**TR5T Adventurer**  
498cc ohv twin || 330lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1973-74

**TRIUMPH 500 TWIN** engine in oil-bearing 250 single scrambler cycle parts. Fairly rare, undergeared but handsome, popular and frisky. One of the most peculiar exhausts ever and unique instruments!

**Prices**  
low £4500 || high £6000

**TRW**  
498cc sv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 70mph || 1948-65

**QUIETLY CHARMING MILITARY** machine; delightful if leisurely. Rigid rear end and sprung saddle provides 'vintage' feel, with added benefit of reasonable brakes. Many parts interchangeable with Trophy trials model, so many were converted. Many were civilianised after being demobbed; modern ironies find numerous examples now converted back to military trim.

**Prices**  
low £3400 || high £5000

**6T Thunderbird**  
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 60mpg || 95mph || 1950-61

**BIG, SOFT AND** smoothish tourer with customary Triumph plus and minus points. Sports version was

the Tiger 110 ('54-'61), which was faster without too much vibration. The iron-head 650 with a sprung hub frame is viewed by some as the best of all Triumphs, and they are excellent riding machines.

**Prices**  
low £4500 || high £5700

**TR6 Trophy**  
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1954-73

**AMERICAN-ORIGINATED SEMI** off-roader which through the years evolved for the UK as a roadster replacement for the Thunderbird, with more stability and similar performance. Bonneville improvements usually ended up on the Trophies too, and many consider the single-carb engines to be sweeter than the twin-carb Bonnies. Engine prefix TR6P denotes an ex-police bike. The Thunderbird name was used for the late (1981-83) short-stroke TR65; an excellently revvy rider's machine but fairly unusual.

**Prices**  
low £4000 || high £6000

**Tiger 110**  
649cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 109mph || 1953-61

**SPORTING UPGRADE OF** the 6T, and an entirely pleasant machine to ride, the T110 was intended to be the fast 650 demanded by the Americans, who bought boatloads of them. Eclipsed by the arrival of the T120 Bonneville in 1959, the T110 was phased out soon after. The last year, 1961, was a particularly fine machine.

**Prices**  
low £4500 || high £5700

**T120 Bonneville**  
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1959-62

**SUPER-SPORTS PRE-UNIT** 650; always a favourite among the café racers, with lots of power, noise, shakes and wild handling at speed. A cracker, but beware fake lash-ups at high prices. The Bonneville name adds a load to the price, but if you must have one...

**Prices**  
low £7000 || high £12000



**1964 350CC NORTON NAVIGATOR.** In barn for more than 25 years in bits. Put it together to see what was missing. Tinware in very good order for a bike 51 years old; no hard parts to find are missing. Original number and a V5 log book. **SOLD FOR £722**

**T120 Bonneville**  
649cc ohv twin || 410lb || 50mpg || 115mph || 1963-74

**THE UNIT BONNIE.** The most famous British twin of them all; hugely well documented development history fills many books (buy one!). 1966-70 bikes fetch the highest prices and are arguably the best of a good bunch. 1971-74 oily-framed 5-speeders (T120V) are the safest, with a disc as well as the fifth gear, and they are easily the cheapest.

**Prices**  
low £3000 || high £12000

**T150 / T160 Trident**  
740cc ohv triple || 503lb || 37mpg || 120mph || 1968-75

**FAST AND EXCITING,** with excellent steering. The disc-braked versions stop well, and the electric start T160 is a very fine all-rounder indeed. A little more money, reliability and further development could have kept it in production for several more years, and had the T180 Thunderbird III made it into production it should have sold well. Everyone should have one, at least once. Good spares supply; several specialists have continued development and improved reliability, but they still require dedicated owner input.

**Prices**  
low £5800 || high £7500

**T140 Bonneville 750**  
744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

**A SYMBOL OF** the dark days of industrial unrest at Triumph's Meriden, Coventry works, the Bonnie somehow weathered the storm and remained available. It sold on character alone, and was kept in production after the final demise of the Triumph Engineering Co by LF Harris, finally being withdrawn in '88 to make way for his new Matchless G80 model. First T140s were actually 725cc, but those are rare now. UK versions suffered from some dire styling, while the US versions always looked a lot better. Early models are usually faster, though as the years passed and development resources shrank, the big battle was to maintain compliance with US emissions standards. This effectively reduced the performance to keep down the noise. Late machines are arguably the best, with some very attractive limited edition models, and with a usually effective electric start taking the strain. The Bing carbs are less desirable, but the US market demanded them, and it's easy enough to regain that lost performance. Affordable and reliable, if not as charming as older incarnations. The first and last of the classic Brit twins?

**Prices**  
low £3200 || high £6000

**TR7 Tiger 750**  
SINGLE CARB VERSION of the



Bonnie. Similar performance, less charisma than the T140, but in many ways a preferable machine. Smoother, usually, easier to keep in tune, and a little more frugal, not least because of the single Amal carb. Super-rare bright yellow TR7T Tiger Trail is a gem ... if you can find one.

**Prices**  
low £3200 || high £4500

**TSX**  
**A FASCINATING ATTEMPT** by Meriden Triumph to produce a 'soft chopper' – a factory custom. Bonneville powerplant and main frame, but with clever styling tweaks and a fat back wheel coupled with many detail changes to produce a striking and unusual machine. Few sold, so rare and overpriced.

**Prices**  
low £5000 || high £7500

**TSS**  
744cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 120mph || 1982-83

**A BONNIE WITH** an 8-valve head. A little more performance and a certain cachet, maybe, but uncertain reliability. The machine should have provided a sporting performance, and was certainly faster than a contemporary T140, but a lack of development resources denied it a decent run. Eight-valves, twin discs, an electric start and subtle styling – as well as rarity – command high prices.

**Prices**  
low £5000, high £7500

## VELOCETTE

One of the most individual of English bike builders, Velocette's great post-war hope was the LE flat twin, which was expected to sell in vast numbers as a bike for everyman. It didn't, and the Hall Green factory had continual cash-flow difficulties as a result. Even so, they built some great singles until the money finally ran out in 1971. Enthusiasts provide a wide range of improvements for

the Veloce original, and all the singles command higher prices than most other Brit equivalents.

**LE**  
192cc sv l/c flat twin || 250lb || 100+mpg || 55mph || 1949-71

**A TRULY HEROIC** (commercial) failure. For years, British motorcyclists had cried out for a water-cooled, silent, sophisticated, shaft-driven bike with built-in legshields. But they didn't buy it, probably because it was too civilised, odd-looking or just gutless. LEs are pleasant little machines with a style of their own, a dedicated following and their own owners' club. The ohv unfaired Valiant roadster was frail but flew.

**Prices**  
low £1650 || high £1950

**Vogue**  
192cc sv l/c flat twin || 330lb || 95mpg || 55mph || 1963-68

**AN ATTEMPT AT** updating the LE with neat glassfibre bodywork. Very attractive and practical bike, but with less performance than the Ariel Leader. Rare now.

**Prices**  
low £2500 || high £3200

**MAC**  
349cc ohv single || 370lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1952-60

**VELO'S OWN TRAD** Brit single is a charming machine with good steering and reliability. An excellent working bike; easy-starting, smooth, nimble and comfortable. Ideal introduction to the marque.

**Prices**  
low £4000 || high £5500

**Viper**  
349cc ohv single || 390lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1956-69

**SWEET 350 SPORTSTER** whose roadholding outperforms the engine. Like most trad Brit heavyweight 350s, its bigger brother sold better.

**Prices**  
low £4500 || high £6500

**MSS**  
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 80mph || 1953-68

**GENTLE TOURING 500.** The last of a breed, with good steering, comfort and reliability; plus the traditional separate gearbox, Miller electrics and strange clutch. Probably the easiest of the Velo singles to live with, boasting good main road performance, fine handling and always adequate braking.

**Prices**  
low £4000 || high £6000

**Venom**  
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1956-68

**SPORTS SINGLE IN** the old tradition. Quick, precise steering and high cruising speeds make it a desirable machine. Although out-dated by the 1960s, Velo enthusiasts kept it in production after all its rivals had fallen. Venom Clubman is the most highly prized, highly priced and hard to ride.

**Prices**  
low £5500 || high £8500

**Thruxton**  
499cc ohv single || 390lb || 50mpg || 105mph || 1964-71

**LAST OF THE LINE,** and priced alongside BSA Gold Stars and Inter Nortons. With which they share the market's stratosphere. Often tough to start, requiring The Knowledge to make them give their best, they are only suited to the truly committed (and wealthy).

**Prices**  
low £7500 || high £12000

## VINCENT

Probably the most widely discussed British marque of all

## E&OE

There will be errors and there are certainly omissions. Correcting them is likely to be too big a task for the CBG simpletons, so your assistance will always be appreciated. If you want us to add / remove / improve an entry, drop a note to

time, this small builder of high-quality, expensive motorcycles soldiered on with their high performance twins until 1955, when even re-badging NSU tiddlers couldn't save them. Considering their ultra-high value, it is good to see so many on the road. Spares plentiful, if rather expensive. A superb owners' club and riding community ensures their survival and desirability.

**Comet**  
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1948-54

**HALF OF THE** famous V-twin (half the size, half the appeal, less than half the price), the Comet shares most of its cycle parts with the big twins, which keeps up the cost, but has a Burman gearbox rather than Vincent's own, making it a little less charismatic in the eyes of some. Good to ride, quick and with excellent steering.

**Prices**  
low £15000 || high £20000

**1000**  
998cc ohv V-twin || 460lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1950-55

**SOLD AS A TOURER** (Rapide), sportster (Shadow) and fully-enclosed super tourer (Black Prince), the big Vin has a fearful reputation to live up to, and largely succeeds. Genuinely capable of holding their own in the modern motorway world, the big twins attract addicts to their unique engineering and riding experience. Electric starts and other upgrades are now increasingly considered acceptable. Prices are in the stars, and show no sign of falling. Few owners are disappointed, and they can't afford to be.

**Prices**  
low £20000 || high £HUGE...

editor@classicbikeguide.com and we'll credit you for any changes which result. Similarly, if you've recently sold or bought a bike, drop us a pic of it with the price, and we'll use it when there's space ... with anonymity if you prefer! **CBG**



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# Yamaha

## YR5 & RD350 – 70-75

WORDS AND PICS BY STEVE COOPER AND HOWARD OGDEN

*The term giant-killer is often overused but this time it's the real deal*

■ Above: RD350A and RD350B, both owned by Peter Collins

**YAMAHA'S ORIGINAL**, full on, 350s had proved to be significantly more successful than the company had anticipated. With horizontally-split crankcases, they were the first engines of their type for Yamaha and marked a significant departure from the previous vertically-split twin motors that were expensive to produce and time-consuming to overhaul.

The YR1's basic architecture had been used on the famous TR350 race machines and once handling issues had been addressed and the arch two-stroke nemesis of seizure had been sorted the resultant TR2 became a devastatingly successful bike at both privateer and GP level. Yamaha was proving to be possibly the most successful factory at grass roots

level, but the porting of the subsequent YR3 and its general construction were proving to be roadblocks to further development. Rather than spin the design out any longer – as had been the case with the YDS1-5 series and its YM305 analogues – a totally new engine was laid out. The Yamaha 350 YR5 (and its smaller 250 YDS7 brother) would prove to be the very making of company. In point of fact, the basic layout of the YR5 was still being used 20 years later on in bikes such as the RZ-1.

The YR5 was a ground-up design that sought to simplify the original 350's construction and build. Such was the uniformity of the concept that it remains possible to mix-and-match parts over





■ Two views of Martin Kemp's YR5 and how Yamaha saw its typical rider

■ Left: It's 1973 and the great Jarno Saarinen was already promoting Yamaha strokers

nearly two decades within one single bike. Not all such amalgams are ideal, but the very fact that such swaps can be done speaks volumes for the initial concept. Other than the engine casings, porting and castings, the primary differences between the incoming and outgoing engines were the location of the clutch and oil pump, along with a revision of bore/stroke dimensions. The YR5 ran a 64mm x 54mm set up in place the older 61mm x 59.6mm and when combined with the new porting arrangements the new motor was decidedly more rev-happy.

Square profiled barrels and simple rectangular heads painted satin black with polished fin edges presented supremely clean lines that were further enhanced by similarly finished outer engine cases. An all-new chassis, derived in part from the company's

racing programme, delivered faster handling along with reduced mass. Yamaha had learned how to make a bike handle and weight wasn't part of that particular equation. A drop of some 14 kilos, allied with an extra two BHP, saw the new 350 capable of besting the magic ton. Although riding impressions might initially belie the fact, the new engine also developed an extra 8% of torque.

The new panels, seat and trim gave the YR5 an altogether new look, much fresher than the conservatively styled R2/R3. Following the then corporate Europa layout, the first YR5 ran purple, red or orange panels with white detailing – very much simpatico with the beginning of psychedelia at the time. With the characteristic seamed silencers emitting what would soon be recognised as trademark Yamaha stroker twin sounds, the bike found a ready market with buyers who wanted performance without bulk, acceleration without vibration, reasonable fuel economy and, perhaps most importantly, low overall mass. Weighing just three kilos more than its 250 brother, the YR5 was a rocketship in waiting and





■ **Top left:** Surely the neatest stroker motor of all time? Howard Ogden's RD350 is a fine device

■ **Above left:** No jokes about the disc. It worked well but less so in the wet

■ **Above centre:** Modernity, RD-style, complete with fake air scoops, crucial at the time

■ **Below:** Steve Calvert's RD350B

capable of outperforming many 500s of the day.

Part way through the YR5's production life (1970 to early 1973) the bike received a minor makeover. The seamed silencers were replaced by a simpler, rounder, profile and the paint scheme was swapped to orange and black. Although verifiable data is a little thin on the ground, it would seem the UK importers of the time, Mitsui Machinery, sold substantially more of the latter model. Pretty much all the purple/white or orange/white YR5s in this country tend to be imports.

From the off, Yamaha had set huge store in racing

as a mechanism to both increase sales and to learn by, so it was natural that the new YR5 would, by whatever means, find its way onto the track. Late 71 and early 72 saw the TR3 racer that mirrored much from the YR5. So closely related were the two bikes that many parts were effectively interchangeable. Yamaha even went so far as to issue a bulletin that detailed the requisite part numbers needed to convert a YR5 road bike to a TR3. You could simply upgrade the engine, transmission and ignition, or go the whole hog and swap over frame, swinging arm, wheels and brakes. Several roadgoing YR5s covertly







benefited from the various porting data and parts available. The end results delivered a bike that would very seriously embarrass homegrown 650 twins.

Mid 1973 saw the launch of the RD350, the logical successor to the YR5 and on the face of it with apparently very few real differences other than cosmetics. As the saying goes, the devil is in the detail. The revised motorcycle had an ace up its sleeve that very soon all of Yamaha's competitors would be imitating. The new machine was equipped with reed valves in the inlet tract carburetors and the intake ducts of the cylinders. In reality, Yamaha had retained the outer profile of the YR5's top end but buried the new reed valves within the back

barrels. The only obvious difference was a thin metal block some 6-8mm thick and four Allen bolts holding the carburettor manifolds in place.

The reed valve was nothing new. They originated from primitive water pumps and functioned by preventing a back-flow of precious irrigation water. They had been used in bellows systems in high temperature forges, church organs and accordions, where they were used to ensure air flowed in only one direction. Yamaha's boffins had spotted that on a piston-ported stroker such as the YR5 a certain definable portion of the fuel/air mixture spent its time oscillating between the inlet side of the piston and the carburettor. Obviously this wasted potential power

■ **Above left:** Yamaha attention to detail was always high. Simple and clean design, with most of the actual engineering tucked away from view

■ **Top right:** At last, the RD350. Radically different from its predecessor, as you can see. Apart from the excellent front disc brake, that is

■ **Above centre:** The engine. Surprisingly neat and unobtrusive for such a relatively rapid device

■ **Above right:** The whole machine was laid out for ease of use. Also for going very fast. Steering damper and a locking fuel cap, too...

## Faults & foibles

Undoubtedly the biggest issue with any of Yamaha's air-cooled, square-barrelled 350s, YR or RD, is the ease with which a serious basket case can be resurrected. Using a pick-and-mix approach, it's supremely easy to turn out a very good hybrid. This, of course, is great if you want a classic Japanese daily rider, but not so wonderful if you are looking for a genuine example.

RD and YR motors are effectively interchangeable, and other than airboxes and ducting everything effectively fits. Beware of any example

running pod filters or similar. Yamaha engine and chassis numbers match, so these need to be checked. Many a 250 has been converted to a 350, but key areas such as the oil pump and primary drives are different.

The bikes are essentially very well engineered and pretty much everything you need to keep one running, in terms of bearings, seals, pistons and the like, can be obtained without too much hassle. Trim parts are hard to obtain, but replica tank and side panel badges are now being produced. Seats on

all examples can age badly. The YR had an open cell foam base that acts like a sponge, causing pronounced rot. The RD seat pans can split or fracture. Some of the RDs were fitted with what are known as hi-top carbs (they're obvious when you see them) and the original lower throttle cables are held at an acute angle. In certain conditions (i.e. rain) the cables can stick in the open position, making for an interesting ride.

The RDs can be sensitive to the correct air filters and it pays to seek out one that

other enthusiasts have used without issue. OEM points and condensers are expensive and pattern items range from usable to absolutely dire. Aftermarket electronic systems are readily available and, amazingly, cheaper than a complete set of points and condensers from Yamaha!

With two suppliers of quality pattern parts offering everything from brake callipers through to service items, there's little reason not to consider one of the classic world's most regularly overlooked middleweights.





■ **Above:** Yamaha described the clocks as 'fully illuminated'. Well, it was the 1970s...

■ **Above right:** Things were simple round the back, too. Although the shocks weren't especially clever and the swinging arm was insubstantial, the bike's suspension worked well enough to excite

■ **Below:** Steve Calvert's RD350B neatly shows off the evolution of Yamaha graphics. Not a lot else appears to have changed over what was in fact a seriously successful design

and was therefore inhibiting the motor's efficiency. In one fell swoop the fitting of reed valves stopped this happening. A pair of simple stainless steel petals mounted on an alloy block transformed the two stroke's induction system. Cheap to manufacture accurately and with negligible effect on a bike's dimensions, the system was almost the mythical silver bullet for strokers.

Unlike disc valve induction systems, there was no need for complex castings, seals or the relocation of the entire ignition system. It was truly a win/win situation. And when the engineers found they could

almost completely rewrite their collective corporate theses on cylinder porting, it must have seemed like they'd truly struck gold. Amazing flexibility, seamless carburation, an ability to pull from low revs in high gear were all additional and well-received bonuses. Yamaha swiftly saw the marketing value of the system and emblazoned the bike's side panel with the logo – Torque Induction.

As an aside, the author had an RD350B back in the day and found that with a modicum of restraint his example would return a very creditable 65mpg... two up.







It wouldn't be until the advent of the fabled Yamaha Power Valve System that the two-stroke made another quantum leap. Quite where Yamaha got the inspiration for the reed valve is still up for debate. Some of the pre-war racing DKWs had utilised reed valve technology to control the berserk nature of their supercharged strokers, which ran two pairs of split singles on a common crankcase. Yamaha were almost certainly aware of what the German company had achieved. Of course, the inspiration may have been much closer to home coming from the sister musical instrument company.

The other fundamental upgrade over the YR5 was the fitment of a disc front brake that matched the RD's performance to a T. Although the YR5's twin leading shoe front end had been fit for purpose, the new disc just had the edge – and of course it also had bragging rights. Blessed with a twin piston calliper, few bikes of the period came anywhere near

the stopping potential... wet weather excepted!

One other significant departure from the YR5 blueprint was the new RD's exhaust system, which ran separate downpipes and silencers with a castellated joining nut pulling up against a deformable composite seal. Yamaha had found the YR5's one piece units were prone to stress corrosion and fracturing at both the barrel/downpipe interface and also where the downpipe was welded to the silencer. The fact the RD350 returned to the YR3's exhaust set would suggest Yamaha's cost-cutting measures with the YR5 were not exactly their best ideas ever.

In terms of panelwork, the new RD was brighter and fresher, with a larger tank than the YR, rounded side panels with faux air inlets and a broader seat. Introduced into the UK in Brandy Red with black and white decals and cast alloy Yamaha tank badges, the bike was pretty much an instant hit. Yamaha were so

■ **Above:** Another RD350B, this time from Howard Ogden again, showing off the machine's drive side

■ **Below:** A class act and a classic engine



## The Peer Group

The YR5 stacks up extremely well against the T350 from Suzuki and Honda's CB350K4. The Suzuki is arguably a smarter looking bike, but in terms of spares supply the Yamaha has it nailed.

The Honda is possibly the better bike for a cross continental tour, but the differences are a lot smaller than you might think. No YR5 is ever going to give you the same buzz as a Kawasaki S2/3, but

it won't drink fuel in the same manner either. You probably have a better chance of getting the Yamaha around a decreasing radius bend as well.

The RD350 stacks up well against the Suzuki GT380 triple, being lighter and substantially more svelte. Compared to Honda's CB360G5 we're talking chalk and cheese, period. The seminal CB400/4 is actually harder work to ride than the

RD and is ultimately more frenetic in its modus operandi. However, the four does have one of the best parts supply backups in the world.

A left field alternative might just be the V35 Moto Guzzi, but these are rare beasts, or possibly Morini's divine 350 V-twin. Sadly both are likely to cost substantially more and parts for the Guzzi are extremely thin on the ground.



keen to bring the bike to the public's attention that they imported a German model RD350 for journalists to test as UK spec bikes were in very short supply. Mitsui had sensibly focussed on the crucial 250 learner market and RD250s were very quickly proving to be the weapon of leaner choice.

A strange feature of the RD350 here in Blighty was the fact that although the bike ran a six-speed gearbox, only five were accessible by the rider. At the time various reasons were postulated as to why this might be, but in reality it was simply exploiting a legal loophole in the then current noise emission regulations. Run on six gears and tested as per the T&Cs, the RD350 would fail the test, allegedly due to induction roar. With the top ratio blocked off and the sprockets replaced to give the correct, new, final drive ratio, the 350 sailed through the mandatory testing.

1974 saw the bike sold as the RD350A, with new minimalist graphics of black and white stripes over a dark maroon paint scheme. Small modifications and upgrades had been carried out, but to all intents and purposes the bike was little changed and sales remained robust.

Around this time, Yamaha USA ran an advert of a guy in a bar looking downcast with a caption suggesting that he wasn't the first big four-cylinder bike owner to be blasted into the weeds by an RD350. The reality was a lot closer than many non-RD350 owners were willing to admit. Around curves and ridden on the gears the Yamaha regularly proved hard to beat. Although beaten in a straight line by a typical period 750, the RD's lack of mass and its quality chassis generally came out on top as soon as bends were encountered. Although by no means totally perfect, the RD250 and 350 were arguably some of earliest Japanese motorcycles to handle



predictably at all speeds. If Suzuki's seminal GS750 is cited as the first truly well-handling Japanese machine, the RD runs it a close second.

1975 saw the launch of the RD350B, which would prove to be the last iteration of the 350 twin concept for five years. Most examples were sold in Silver Mist with a comprehensive set of swirling black and white graphics. Noticeable by its absence was the cast alloy tank badge, which had now been dropped in favour of a vinyl Yamaha logo and a cheaper to produce tank. At long last the sixth gear was freed up on UK bikes that, when combined with a set of revised final drive ratios, allowed the final cog in the box to act almost, but not quite, as an overdrive.

Within the three model years of the RD350 there were various market variations and differences, with USA machines running different paint schemes on lower profile, smaller capacity tanks and larger rear lights. A fair number of these have been imported to the UK as they are generally in better cosmetic condition than their UK equivalents.

Many UK RD350s ended their lives as cheap hacks when Yamaha increased the motor's stroke to deliver the RD400. Slightly faster than the 350 and a little more potent/frenetic, the coffin-tanked RDs became the weapon of choice for urban hooligans from 1976 until the launch of the infamous LC350 – aka the Elsie.

For those who know little of the early RDs, the 350s are generally overlooked in favour of either the 400 or the water-cooled 350. Those who have experienced the RD350 will tell you they are one of Yamaha's best-kept classic secrets and deserve more coverage than they generally get. Back in the day they were a true giant-killer and even four decades on they still cut the mustard. Sample one and be seriously impressed because they really are that good. **GRG**

## The Indian Connection

1975 might well have been the end of the RD350, but for a deal set up between Yamaha Japan and the Escorts Group of India.

The latter went straight for the heart of India's motorcycle

industry by producing a bike designed to upstage the all-pervasive Enfield. The disc brake was dropped in favour of a TLS drum brake that looked like it owed a lot to the old YR5.

Sold from 1983, the

bike was marketed as the Rajdoot and ran a motor detuned via carb jetting and exhaust port restrictions.

Turning out some 30bhp against the original 350Bs 39, the first model ran until



1985 and was known as the HT or High Torque model. From 1986 the power was dropped to 27bhp and the bike was renamed as the LT or low torque. Perceived as being too complex for the average roadside bike shop to fix and too thirsty compared to the Bullet, production ended in 1989.

Amazingly, the barrels for the Rajdoot are still easily available and although their porting is considerably more conservative, ironically the accuracy of the ports and their positioning is consistently and considerably greater than anything the parent company turned out!





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# Pointless potential

*For many motorcycle mechanics, electrical systems are the darkest of arts. We prove it ain't necessarily so with a simple, fit-and-forget electronic ignition conversion for a Triumph triple*

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MORGAN RUE

**AN OFT-HEARD VIEW** is: "I'm keeping the original points and condenser, because if it fails I can always fix it to get home." A persuasive argument, although on that basis, we'd all be riding side-valve singles with access plugs to remove the exhaust valve and lap it in at the side of the road, as the occasional horse and cart clip-clops by, and farmers harvest with a scythe. We have accepted that with the improvement to metals, valves could be left undisturbed for long stretches without failure ensuing.

So why not incorporate modern switching technology to replace mechanical points, and perhaps even more importantly, shaky advance curves based on bobweights that stubbornly refuse to bob?

The drawbacks to old mechanical

systems are manifold and, on my personal transport, are multiplied by the number of cylinders. Three fibre heels rub on the cam and three felt wicks allegedly keep it lubricated: all three bear down on the poor cam, making its struggle to full advance a somewhat random affair. The whole system belongs in a museum. Originality fans will have to learn to live with pounding fruitlessly on kickstarts, to the amusement of onlookers.

I believe we owe it to old bikes to combat their reputation for inertia with the best available technology. All this is the run-up to why and how I fitted electronic ignition to my Triumph Hurricane. The photos are specific to the triple, but the principles for installation apply almost universally.



Behind the cover lurks...



...this lot. Pretty crowded in there





Start by removing the bobweight bolt



With the pillar bolts removed, the points plate hangs loose



Threaded rod screws in to receive a gentle bashing

## CHOOSE YOUR SUPPLIER

There is plenty of choice out there on t'interweb, but for triples the major players are Lucas, Boyer and Tri-Spark. Be sure to check that your existing coils will be suitable for the new set-up, particularly if you are doing this as a weekend swap. Tri-Spark's box works with the standard coils, making the swap a little quicker.

The first step, as with all such electrical interventions, is to remove the battery. Maybe put it on a trickle-charge while you attack the strip-down. The second is to find the points, usually hidden behind a chrome cover, retained by three, or more commonly two, screws. Remove and set aside. Lay the bits out neatly on your bench/floor/upturned beer crate, as nothing is more irritating than reassembling with only 95% of the parts you started with.

Now you can see the points-plate and it's retained by small pillar-bolts just begging to be removed by pliers. DON'T. Find that little spanner you thought you'd never need and remove the pillar bolts carefully. Don't drop them as one will certainly find its way to the nearest grid or dark place, thus delaying the rebuild. And who keeps spares of that particular fastener?

## IGNITION 101

Electrics can be confusing. It's a fact. Some rather gifted amateur mechanics I know will tackle any mechanical job rather than mess with wires. Black magic? Not at all. This is how your standard coil ignition works:

Coils are transformers, pure and simple, just like the one that powered your Scalextric. In that example, the input was 240V and the output was 12V. Simple transformers have two primary terminals, plugged into the house mains and two secondary plugged into the track after being rectified to direct current.

Thing is, transformers can only transform alternating current. Go get any transformer and connect its primary to a direct current battery, and watch your transformer get hot, and your battery get flat. Nothing will appear at the secondary.

Joe Lucas' standard coil is a transformer where the primary terminals are the spade connections, the secondaries are the coil's body and the fat black lead that makes you jump.

However, the bike's onboard supply is a direct current supply, which would just make the coil hot.

So if you disconnect one of the

primary leads, the coil goes from 12V to nowt. This change of voltage looks like an alternating current, so as the supply voltage drops from 12V to 0V, the collapsing magnetic field inside the coil induces a corresponding voltage in the secondary.

Inside your coil, the ratio of the primary windings to the secondary is not 20:1 (as in the Scalextric transformer), but maybe 1:2000, stepping up rather than down, 12V to 24,000V, if only for an instant. That kind of voltage can jump spark plug gaps even in a 140psi atmosphere.

The points are opened mechanically to do this rapid switching. They do it rather well, for long periods, but they do it less and less well as moving parts wear. As the points open, the 12V tries manfully to jump the gap, eroding the contacts' faces. We stick a capacitor (called, oddly, a condenser) across the points, to divert the jumping 12V, with a degree of success.

Electronic ignitions replace the mechanical switch, thus dispensing with a condenser. Crucially, they replace the mechanical advance curve with clever electronics. What's not to like?

A sheathed wire goes from the point-plate to the coils, usually via an internal drilling of your engine case.

This cable will need to be removed from the coils, and drawn through the drilling, which in my case was of a smaller diameter than three of Uncle Joe's snap-connector bullets. One had to be snipped off. If you can get yours out without, it's one more concours point for the next owner if he or she is an originality nut. (Establish a cardboard box for all the redundant kit, if only as a selling point to the above originality nut.)

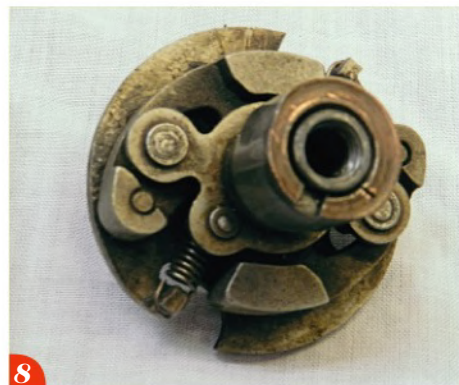
You can now access the bobweight assembly and you will need either the correct bolt, or a length of suitably tapped rod, or even an undersized rod, to remove it from the taper.

First remove the holding bolt from the middle. Then screw in your larger (in my case 5/16 BSF) rod, tap gently from all points of the compass and the assembly will obligingly fall off the taper. If not, repeat the above a tad less gently, till it does.

As far as the engine is concerned, this is the end of the dismantling and it's now time to mantle.



Gentle taps with a small Thor hammer will do the job



Cam and bobweight





9

Keep it neat



10

Undo connections at the coils end of the circuit



11

Keep this original kit for the purist next owner

## TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Read the instructions. At least twice. Then set your crankshaft to be in the right place for the ignition to fire, in this case, the timing side cylinder. It's important to understand that your timing marks, usually on the alternator rotor, will line up every revolution, but only every second revolution will be on the approach to compression. If you set your electronic ignition to fire at exactly the right time, but on the exhaust stroke, you'll wish you'd kept the points system. To be sure, rotate the engine with the plugs out and the exhaust valve(s) visible.

Watch the exhaust valve bob down, opening for the exhaust TDC, then continue to rotate the engine until the next TDC approaches – that's the one on compression. Line up your marks accordingly and fit the replacement rotor. The little 'ear' on the rotor is what passes close to the pick-up coils on the stator plate (see later) and it's important that the rotor fits on the taper far enough that the 'ear' doesn't guillotine the next bit you fit, the stator plate. In the kit is a handy Perspex straight edge to lie across the points housing to check for clearance. If there is none, remove the rotor and file a bit off till there is. In this case, the rotor was projecting almost to the Perspex gauge, so it needed to be filed down by that well-known unit of measurement, the 'tad'. A tip here is to screw the metric extractor bolt (supplied) into the rotor, then add your own 8mm locknut and clamp the bolt in your vice, rather than the rotor itself. You need between 2 and 3mm of clearance, and I checked using small drill bits until it was good.

Pressing on, we can now fit the Tri-Spark stator plate according to the instructions. Note that the stator plate is thinner than the metal points plate it replaces, so the kit comes with three small washers for each pillar bolt as spacers. Without 'em, your pillar bolts will screw too far in, making the points cover hard or impossible to fit.

If you installed the rotor as specified in the instructions, and if your engine was in the correct position at the time, this will give an ignition timing close enough to permit start-up. Final adjustments will be made with a strobe light, once you've installed the black box, rewired the coils, and finished patting yourself on the back.



12

The kit of sparks



13

Resistor caps, or resistor HT leads required (not in the kit)



14

Set to the mark on the correct stroke



16

Fit the rotor with the ear in the right place



15

Exposing the rockers allows you to know which TDC to work from



17

Check for sticky-out ear. File to 2 to 3mm



18

Feed in new points plate wiring.





19 In goes the hi-tech stuff



20 Looks like it was made for it (it was)



21 Replace pillar bolts with spacers provided



22 The clever box



23 Find a good location



24 Fit the box resiliently. Note holes for cabling

## WILY WIRING

There are a number of changes needed to connect up the coils and a wiring option to re-wire for negative earth is included in the kit, although I can't see the point. You'd need to change the Zener diode and your lights wouldn't be any brighter afterwards. And I am not planning to fit a radio just yet...

All three coils will have a new wire connecting the positive to the chassis. Make this a good connection, with a nice terminal placed over a bare metal part of the frame, secured with a clean nut and bolt. It's worth the effort. Three new wires now set off north from the coil negatives to the black box, to join (not literally) the five (in a sleeve) from the points plate, and two more, a positive earth and a live feed with an in-line fuse, supplied. This makes a whopping 10 wires, all supplied in the kit.

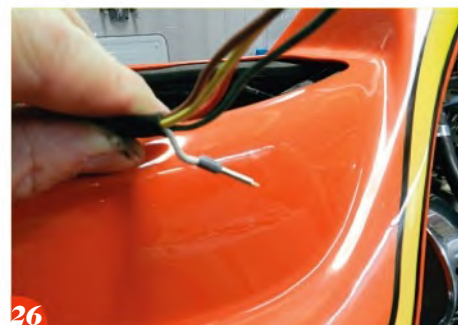
Since I put the clever box under the seat, connecting up the 10 wires needed was very straightforward and I could cut the wires to the perfect length. The five sleeved ones reached fine, but the three coming from the coils were short. I took the time to find three lengths of the same colours as the originals. I recommend you do the same. Using three the same colour will definitely end in misery.

If you're planning to gaffer tape the box to the frame spine or Velcro it under the battery tray, the wires will need to be left longer, or you will need very small hands to screw down each connection point. And checking it will be more of a challenge.

Each of the 10 wires was terminated in a 'shoelace' crimp, fitted with the correct tool. Buy or borrow this: it's worth it. I used to be a devotee of soldering everything, as solder works better than nasty blue-clad connectors inexpertly crimped by novices armed with



25 Metric dome nuts finish it off



26 These are called shoelace crimps. Can't think why

cheap pliers. However, bad soldering is no better and corrosion from fluxes can be an issue. The crimps I used will allow me to remove the seat and tank by demounting all 10 connections. My wires were also tagged with number tags, but that's just showing off. But it does look neat.

For the Hurricane, I elected to keep the original wiring and connectors, and just tie it up out of sight, but in a rebuild, you may prefer to remove them completely. Ditto you could throw away the condenser pack to save weight, but in the interests of originality and indolence, I left my condensers in place. My unused wiring was fed into oversize plastic sleeving and nipped closed with cable ties.

## JOB'S A GOOD 'UN

Before start-up, check the wiring. Twice. Refitting the battery may also help. Flood 'em up. Prod gently. Listen to the music. Set the tickover as low as you like. The Hurricane ticked over at 400rpm, which, according to triple expert and technical wizard Richard Darby, is too low as lubrication suffers. Adjust it up to around 800rpm. Stand back. Admire. **CBC**



27 Ten connections. Take your time...



28 All wires wired. Job done. Nearly...





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**2015 MASH MOTORCYCLES ROADSTAR**, 0 miles, Brand New Bike! It's French with a 2 year warranty! Siemens fuel injection, 4 valve XBR motor! 5 speed, electric and kick start, 13 litre tank and only 140 kgs! Looks fantastic and great price of.....**£3,699**



**1960 reg NORTON SS650**, 102 miles. We see lots of classics and sell over 500 a year! I have been selling classics for 20 years and this is the best well built bike I have ever seen CONCOURS in its condition. And a work of art! Over 20k spent on the most expensive parts, and full engine rebuild, runs and rides as if you were a TT racer! It has a very nice hard back book of the rebuild done! It was a 650 SS matching numbers bike and now it should sit in your front room in your house! Or yes you can ride it with confidence, it's a must see bike! For the full spec of the build (which is as long as your arm) please ask for Steve in sales. YOU MUST COME AND LOOK AT THIS BIKE.....**£19,500**



**2010 10 Reg ROYAL ENFIELD GT**, 650 miles. This is our own built in house special GT500 which we have built with British parts, painted black engine and custom paint job, over £2000 worth of parts! and our own warranty! too much to list but take a look at photos!! for more info ask for Steve our Enfield expert.. PS we can also build one to your spec and at a very good price!.....**£4,995**



**1956 reg MOTO RUMI SPORT**, 0 miles. RUMI BICARBURATORE SUPERSPORT 125 CONCOURS this is a true concours bike and very very rare as far as I am aware the only one for sale in the world! It is a pure racing bike 2 stroke, Dellorto twin carbs, 4 speed, plunger twin rear shocks, 18L tank, this one was built in 1954 and it looks new! the last one to sell went for £20k so think the price is about where it should be. **£14,500**



**1960 reg NORTON Jubilee 250**, 0 miles, stunning condition, lots of paperwork, matching numbers bike, its a great looking bike, rare and collectable, see photos, a must see bike.....**£3,650**



**1981 reg SUZUKI GSX**, 0 miles. This bike has been restored to a very high standard! great paint and original exhausts the pair not two into one! lots spent we have lots of bills! must see bike!.....**£2,950**



**1981 X reg HONDA CB250**, Classic, 19,000 miles. Here we have a stunning timewarp CB250 deluxe, lots of history, both keys, owners hand book, one of the very best!! will come with 12 months MOT. ....**£2,450**



**2015 Reg ROYAL ENFIELD GT Classic** 0 miles. We are the largest, award winning Royal Enfield dealers in the UK. You can see this bike in our showroom now, WE SUPPLY UPGRADE PACKAGE for only £350.00 which replaces the silly exhaust and mirrors and ecu tune which makes it into the ACE CAFE show spec and sounds fantastic! Also we can now supply dual seat and foot pegs!! Please ask for Steve, the Royal Enfield expert .....**£4,995**



**1978 T Reg BMW R100** 18,600 miles. Very rare original R100RS very low miles, runs and rides great and it's in fantastic condition! Will come with new MOT.....**£4,799**



**1969 T reg BSA BANTAM**, 0 miles. Here we have a very smart Bantam 175, 4 speed, all runs and rides, great matching number same reg from new.....**£2,399**



**1992 reg YAMAHA XJ750**, 30,000 miles. Fantastic condition, all original and very smart! one of the best you will find!.....**£2,399**



**1961 Reg AJS Model 8** 0 miles. Here we have a AJS Model 8 350 and lots of history! Matching numbers, new rechromed rims and spokes, new exhaust, new carb plus old one, great sound and a nice runner!.....**£3,699**



**1972 K reg ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET**, 0 miles. This bike is a great find early 1972 Bullet very rare, it has the early Smiths clocks, and is in great condition, heritage cert, with bike and tax free! see photos.....**£2,350**



**2002 02 Reg URAL SOLO 745 Retro Manual**, Naked, Petrol, 9,000 miles. Here we have a very rare bike! It's Ural big twin Solo. It's in fantastic condition with lots of history! It runs and rides as new! and has lots of extras, a must see bike.....**£3,299**



**1987 D Reg BMW R65 Classic** 55,000 miles. Here we have a great running R65 cafe, with very good history! lots of MOT's and handbook, cafe bar end mirrors new cafe style seat, lots spent! be different!! will come with 12 months MOT....**£3,699**



**1991 J reg HONDA CD250**, 0 miles. This is a great running cafe racer, lots spent and looks so retro and just as it should look! 12 months MOT! .....**£1,899**



**1986 D Reg YAMAHA FS F.S.I.E.**, 0 miles. Full restoration, this bike looks like new and it rides like new! What great fun!!.....**£3,599**



**1979 T Reg HONDA CB400 400 Super Four Manual**, Roadster/Retro, Petrol, 30,000 miles. Superdream 400 time warp bike all standard and in fantastic condition! must be seen, just great!.....**£2,850**



**1951 Reg JAMES COMET** 0 miles. James Comet very smart and in fantastic condition!! See photos! Just great fun, Villiers motor.....**£2,650**

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**AJS 16MS** 1957, in original excellent condition with good chrome & rewind magneto, starts well & runs well, 15,535 miles, £2950 ono Tel. 07969 344367 Middlesex



**AJS 16MS 350cc**, 1957, tax & MoT exempt, original number, matching buff logbook, manuals & history, nice bike, good condition, £3200 Tel. 01420 84061 Hamps



**AJS 16MS** 1957, original vgc with good chrome and rewind magneto, starts well and runs well, 15,535 on clock, £2950 ono Tel. 07969 344367 Middlesex



**ARIEL 500 OHV** 1930, Black Ariel, all numbers correct, nice trans reg number, good 'Banbury' bike for 2016, easy starter, £7000 Tel. 07980 750700 Shrewsbury



**ARIEL GOLDEN Sports Arrow**, 250cc indicators, MoT June 2016, £3000 Tel. 01661 853032; 07989 125648 Northumberland



**ARIEL LEADER** 1959, recent rebuild, starts & runs well, always attracts attention, MoT exempt, giving up biking, selling all bikes, Tel. 07770 781168 Sheffield



**ARIEL SQUARE 4** a fully restored mark one in vgc, registered and runs well, £11,000 Tel. 07887 617572 Lanarkshire



**BANTAM BUSHMAN** lookalike, many new parts completely rebuilt D14 engine loads of Bushman parts, £1850 Tel. Rob 07703 892706 Northumberland



**BMW 1200C** OEM accessories, panniers, King/Queen seat, low miles, w/screen, cruising comfort, on Sorn, £2750 Tel. 02380 261852 Hampshire



**BMW K1** 1000cc, undamaged, OEM accessories Krauser panniers, vgc, ok tyres, lowered footrest, very fast for brave riders, Sorn, £2750 Tel. 02380 261852 Hampshire



**BMW R1100R** 1999, vgc, panniers, screen, heated grips, 17,000 miles, ring for more details, £2100 ono Tel. 0115 9639782 Notts



**BMW R45** 500cc, 1980, BMW R45 Steib chasis handbuilt body, 23,000 miles only, MoT, history bills etc, £2400 Tel. 07523 971861 Surrey



**BSA badged HMC 125 classic**, June 2014, one owner, totally as new, only 104 kms, still under warranty, Suzuki 4 stroke engine, £1100 ovno Tel. 07733 406146 Solihull



**BSA BANTAM Model D7**, 1959, good runner, new tyres, historic vehicle, tax and MoT exempt, £750 ono Tel. Derek 07594 471560 Warwickshire



**BSA BANTAM 125cc**, 1957 EX GPO garaged, unused for years, starts and runs ok, £950 Tel. 01623 626301 Nottinghamshire



# Andy Tiernan

Est. 1972



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1936 BSA B18 250cc.....£4,250



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73 Yamaha RD350, 17k, superb..... £3,750  
91 Yamaha SR125, nice learner..... £995  
84 Yamaha RD125LC, superb in white/blue..... £2,500



64 AJS Mod 18 Statesman, fantastic.  
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BSA B44E  
1923 Dunelt one  
owner from new  
1967 Bultaco metrella  
Norton model 7  
Norton ES2  
BSA 350 Empire Star  
BSA A65 Lightning  
Rocket  
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OHV 350  
1940s MM500

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Blackburn 350  
BSA B31  
Triumph T120 unit  
1919 Villiers  
Tri TR7  
Tri TR6  
Tri T100 pre unit  
Tri pre unit all alloy  
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AJS Twins/Singles  
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BSA A65 Firebird  
Francis Barnett 197  
1967 Triumph  
Bonneville  
Triumph Tiger 90  
Norton ES2

## BSA A10

Triumph 21  
BMW R69  
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# Triumph Tiger Cub Club

*The small Triumph singles inspire a significant amount of enthusiasm and have their own organisation dedicated to keeping them in purrfect condition*

PHOTOS BY THE TIGER CUB CLUB

FOR MORE THAN a decade, the Triumph Terrier and Tiger Cub Club has helped owners keep their tiny Triumphs ready to roar into action. Often overlooked by bigger organisations that cater to big-bore twins and triples, the Cub models have a dedicated following all of their own. Cub expert Mike Estall has long held a register of machines, but the Cub Club goes one stage further by assisting owners with all aspects of repair, restoration and registration.

Membership of the Cub Club has grown to over 600, mainly based in the UK, but with more joining from as far afield as Australia, North America, Bermuda, India, Scandinavia and most other European countries. Rising values of all old bikes, and Tiger Cubs in particular, means that many machines have been brought back



from the brink of extinction and returned to circulation. Running a Cub has become easier of late, thanks to improved access to old-stock spares and to some dedicated specialists who remanufacture hard to find components and modern upgrades. Many riders started their motorcycling life on a T15 or T20 and are keen to re-live the experience, hence it's not unusual to find good examples selling for £5000 or more.

Unlike some clubs that have an extensive committee and a complicated organisation, the Cub Club thrives through the dedication of a few volunteers who manage the straightforward membership system. There's no annual renewal fee – just a one-off lifetime membership payment when you join. You don't need to own a Cub to become a member of the club; the idea is to encourage riders to join the pack (should that be 'pride'?) and nurture their enthusiasm.

New members receive a welcome pack containing the latest club newsletters, a free magazine, a works manual on CD along with a list of recommended suppliers – many of whom give useful discounts. Following problems with the DVLA, the Cub Club has introduced a new service to streamline the registration process for re-discovered and rebuilt bikes. Members can also buy and sell bikes and spares through the club's online forum. All communication is by email and a regular newsletter is circulated to keep members in touch with club activities – such as staging impressive displays at the Stafford Show and Founders' Day. A small stock of rare parts is available to members, as well as a range of Cub and Terrier literature, logos, stickers and information.

Contact [mike@tigercubs.plus.com](mailto:mike@tigercubs.plus.com) or see [tigercubclub.co.uk](http://tigercubclub.co.uk) **CBC**

## Club guide

### AMC – AJS & Matchless Owners' Club:

Admin Officer, Unit 3, Robinson Way, Telford Industrial Estate, Kettering, Northants NN16 8PT. [www.jampt.com](http://www.jampt.com)

### Ariel Owners' Club:

[www.arielownersmcc.co.uk](http://www.arielownersmcc.co.uk)

### Association of Pioneer Motorcyclists:

John Webber, 11 Bootham Close, Billericay, Essex CM12 9NQ.

### Bath Classic MCC:

[bcmcc.org](http://bcmcc.org)

### Benelli Motobi Club GB:

[www.benelliclubgb.net](http://www.benelliclubgb.net)

### BMF:

[www.bmf.co.uk](http://www.bmf.co.uk)

### BMW Club:

[www.thebmwclub.org.uk](http://www.thebmwclub.org.uk)

### British Motorcycle Preservation Society

(North Wales):

[www.bmpsnwales.org.uk](http://www.bmpsnwales.org.uk)

Bridgnorth Vintage

### Machinery Club:

[www.bvmc.org.uk](http://www.bvmc.org.uk) or [www.motorbikemover.co.uk](http://www.motorbikemover.co.uk)

### British Motorcycle Riders' Club (Oxford):

[http://bmrco.wordpress.com](http://http://bmrco.wordpress.com)

### British Two-Stroke Club:

[www.britishtwostrokeclub.org.uk](http://www.britishtwostrokeclub.org.uk)

### Brough Superior Club:

[www.broughsuperiorclub.com](http://www.broughsuperiorclub.com)

### BSA Bantam Club:

[www.bsabantamclub.com](http://www.bsabantamclub.com)

### BSA Owners' Club:

[www.bsaownersclub.co.uk](http://www.bsaownersclub.co.uk)

### Bucks British & Classic MCC:

Meets at The Plough at Cadsden, Princes Risborough, Bucks every Wednesday evening. [www.bbcmcc.freeuk.com](http://www.bbcmcc.freeuk.com)

### CBX Riders' Club (UK):

[www.ukcbxclub.com](http://www.ukcbxclub.com)

### Christian Motorcyclists' Assoc:

[www.cmauk.net](http://www.cmauk.net)

### Classic Racing Motorcycle Club:

[www.crmc.co.uk](http://www.crmc.co.uk)

### Cossack Owners' Club:

[www.cossackownersclub.co.uk](http://www.cossackownersclub.co.uk)

### Cotton Owners and

Enthusiasts' Club:

[www.cottonownersclub.com](http://www.cottonownersclub.com)

### DOT Motorcycle Club:

[www.dot-motorcycle-club.co.uk](http://www.dot-motorcycle-club.co.uk)

### Douglas Owners' Club:

[www.douglasmcc.co.uk](http://www.douglasmcc.co.uk)

### Ducati Owners' Club (GB):

[www.docgb.org](http://www.docgb.org)

### Dunstall Owners' Club:

[www.dunstall.wordpress.com](http://www.dunstall.wordpress.com)

### Excelsior Talisman

### Enthusiasts:

Colin Powell, Ginger Hall, Village Way, Little Chalfont, Bucks HP7 9PU. Tel/fax 01494 762166.

### Exeter British MCC:

[www.exeterbritishmotorcycleclub.co.uk](http://www.exeterbritishmotorcycleclub.co.uk)

### Federation of Sidecar Clubs:

[www.sidecars.org.uk](http://www.sidecars.org.uk)

### Fellowship of Christian

Motorcyclists:

[www.fcm-bikers.co.uk](http://www.fcm-bikers.co.uk)

### Francis-Barnett Owners' Club:

[www.francis-barnett.co.uk](http://www.francis-barnett.co.uk)

### Gold Star Owners' Club:

[www.bsagoldstarownersclub.com](http://www.bsagoldstarownersclub.com)

### Greeves Riders' Association:

[www.greeves-riders.org.uk](http://www.greeves-riders.org.uk)

### Gwent Classic Trials and

Scrambles Club:

Mark Giles, 42 Picton Street, Griffithstown, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 5HB. 01495 757930.

### Harley-Davidson Riders' Club

of Great Britain:

[www.hdrclgb.org.uk](http://www.hdrclgb.org.uk)

### Hesketh Owners' Club:

[www.heskethownersclub.org.uk](http://www.heskethownersclub.org.uk)

### Highland Classic MCC:

[www.highlandclassicmotorcycleclub.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.highlandclassicmotorcycleclub.org.uk/index.htm) [www.facebook.com/highlandclassicmotorcycleclub?ref=hl](http://www.facebook.com/highlandclassicmotorcycleclub?ref=hl)

### Honda Owners' Club:

[www.hoc.org.uk](http://www.hoc.org.uk)

### Honda Classic MCC:

Chairman: Kevin Richards, 40 Penton House, Hartslock Drive, Thamesmead, London SE2 9UZ. 0798 4099 473.

### HYCAM:

Paul Morin, 5 Frederick Close, Cheam, Surrey SM1 2HY.

### Indian Motorcycle Club of GB:

[www.indianmotorcycle.co.uk](http://www.indianmotorcycle.co.uk)

### Indian Riders' Motorcycle Club:

[www.indianriders.co.uk](http://www.indianriders.co.uk)

### Italian IMOC/GB:

Membership enquiries: Phil Cody, 4 Heys Farm Cottages, Heys Lane, Romley, Stockport SK6 4NS.

### Japanese Classic MCC:

NET Willoughby, Hazeldene House, 240 Gloucester Rd, Cheltenham GL51 8NR.

### Jawa/CZ OMC of GB &

Ireland:

[www.jawaczownersclub.co.uk](http://www.jawaczownersclub.co.uk)

FOR YOUR CLUB TO APPEAR ON THIS PAGE PLEASE EMAIL ALL RELEVANT CONTACT DETAILS TO [VDAWSON@MORTONS.CO.UK](mailto:vdawson@mortons.co.uk)





■ **Left:** Pam's Plunger was donated to the Cub Club by her brother after she passed away, so it could be returned to fine fettle and ridden in her memory

■ **Right:** A club member wanted 'the perfect Cub', so the group's expertise was utilised with the restoration of this T20



**Kawasaki Triples Club:**  
[www.kawasakitriplesclub.co.uk](http://www.kawasakitriplesclub.co.uk)

**Laverda Owners' Club:**  
[www.iloc.co.uk](http://www.iloc.co.uk)

**LE Velocette Owners' Club:**  
[www.leveloclub.org.uk](http://www.leveloclub.org.uk)

**London Sidecar Club:**  
[www.londonsidecarclub.co.uk](http://www.londonsidecarclub.co.uk)

**MAG:**  
[www.mag-uk.org](http://www.mag-uk.org)

**Maico Owners' Club:**  
[www.maico.org.uk](http://www.maico.org.uk)

**Military Vehicle Trust:**  
[www.mvt.org.uk](http://www.mvt.org.uk)

**Morgan 3-Wheeler Club:**  
[www.mtwc.co.uk](http://www.mtwc.co.uk)

**Morini Riders' Club:**  
[www.morini-riders-club.com](http://www.morini-riders-club.com)

**Moto Guzzi Club GB:**  
[www.motoguzziclub.co.uk](http://www.motoguzziclub.co.uk)

**Moto Rumi Club:**  
[www.motorumicub.co.uk](http://www.motorumicub.co.uk)

**Motor Cycling Club (MCC):**  
[www.themotorcyclingclub.org.uk](http://www.themotorcyclingclub.org.uk)

**MV Agusta Owners' Club:**  
[www.mvownersclub.co.uk](http://www.mvownersclub.co.uk)

**National Autocycle and Cyclemotor Club:**  
[www.thebuzzingclub.co.uk](http://www.thebuzzingclub.co.uk)

**National Sprint Association:**  
[www.nationalsprintassociationltd.com](http://www.nationalsprintassociationltd.com)

**New Imperial Owners' Association:**  
[www.newimperial.co.uk](http://www.newimperial.co.uk)

**Norman Cycles Club:**  
[www.normanmotorcycles.org.uk](http://www.normanmotorcycles.org.uk)

**Norton Owners' Club:**  
[www.nortonownersclub.org](http://www.nortonownersclub.org)

**NSU Owners' Club:**  
[www.nsuoc.co.uk](http://www.nsuoc.co.uk)

**Oregon Vintage Motorecyclists:**  
[www.oregonvintage.org](http://www.oregonvintage.org)

**Panther Owners' Club:**  
[www.pantherownersclub.com](http://www.pantherownersclub.com)

**Pre-65 MotoCross Club:**  
[www.pre65.co.uk](http://www.pre65.co.uk)

**Professional & Executive MCC:**  
[www.pemc.co.uk](http://www.pemc.co.uk)

**Register of Unusual Microcars:**  
[www.rumcars.org](http://www.rumcars.org)

**Rotary Owners' Club:**  
[www.rotaryclub.org.uk](http://www.rotaryclub.org.uk)

**Royal Enfield & Enfield India:**  
[www.royalenfield.org.uk](http://www.royalenfield.org.uk)

**Rudge Enthusiasts:**  
[www.rudge.co.uk](http://www.rudge.co.uk)

**Scottish Classic MCC:**  
[www.scottishclassicmotorcycleclub.moonfruit.com](http://www.scottishclassicmotorcycleclub.moonfruit.com)

**Seott Owners' Club:**  
[www.seottownersclub.org](http://www.seottownersclub.org)

**SOHC/4 Owners' Club:**  
[www.sohc4.net](http://www.sohc4.net)

**South Wales Sunbeam MCC:**  
[dave.harrison47@yahoo.com](mailto:dave.harrison47@yahoo.com)

**Sunbeam MCC:**  
[www.sunbeam-mcc.co.uk](http://www.sunbeam-mcc.co.uk)

**Sunbeam Owners' Fellowship (S7 & S8):**  
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**Sussex British MCC:**  
[www.sbmcc.vpweb.co.uk](http://www.sbmcc.vpweb.co.uk)

**Suzuki Kettle Club:**  
[www.thekettleclub.com](http://www.thekettleclub.com)

**Suzuki Owners' Club:**  
[www.suzukiownersclub.co.uk](http://www.suzukiownersclub.co.uk)

**Teesside Yesteryear Motor Club:**  
[www.tymc.org.uk](http://www.tymc.org.uk)

**The 59 Club:**  
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**The Classic Bikers' Club:**  
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**The Invalid Carriage Register:**  
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**Thumper Club:**  
[www.thumperclub.com](http://www.thumperclub.com)

**TR30C (Triples, BSA & Triumph):**  
<http://tr30c.co.uk>

**Triton Owners' Club:**  
[www.triton-owners-club.co.uk](http://www.triton-owners-club.co.uk)

**Triumph Dayt-owners:**  
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**Triumph Owners' MCC:**  
[www.tomcc.org](http://www.tomcc.org)

**TT Supporters' Club:**  
[www.ttsupportersclub.com](http://www.ttsupportersclub.com)

**Velocette Owners' Club:**  
[www.velocetteowners.com](http://www.velocetteowners.com)

**Vincent/HRD Owners' Club:**  
[www.voc.uk.com](http://www.voc.uk.com)

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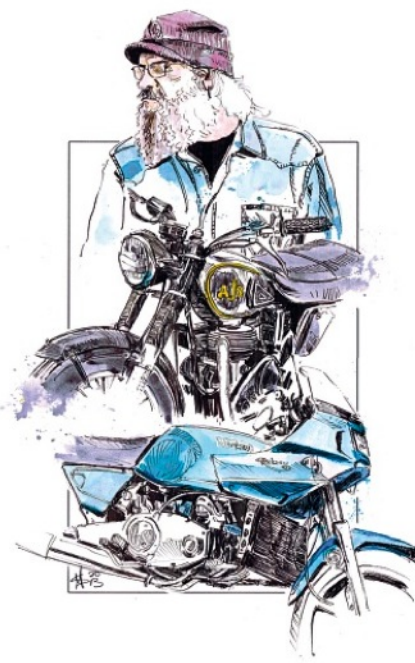
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**Vintage Motor Scooter Club:**  
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**Wessex Vehicle Preservation Club (Classic Motorcycle Section):**  
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**WIMA GB (Women's International Motorcycle Club):**  
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FRANK WESTWORTH

## FAMOUS LAST WORDS

*Sometimes old friends  
need to part. It's never easy,  
but the road is long...*

**I HAVE SOLD** a motorcycle. Stop yawning. It's not something I do every day, and unless you're in the Trade it's probably not something you do every day either. So listen up. I have sold a motorcycle. It was one of my all-time favourite motorcycles and I really did not want to part with it. The old ruin and I have shared our eccentricities over almost two decades. I can offer no reason – excuse – for selling it, because it's a great bike, but quite suddenly out of the blue it had to go.

It was a bike with everything. Character, charm, go and stop – even steering, comfort and luggage. The big beast had been expertly rebuilt to my own spec just a few years ago and together we'd whizzed and whirled our way around the whole of mainland Britland a couple of times since. It was relaxed, reliable, rapid and rare – rare enough were it a common or garden rotary Norton, but this was the only survivor of three prototype machines built for the City of London police force and modified substantially by the factory to tame the rotormotor's sometimes beastly behaviour in heavy traffic. Technical stuff that is too tedious to repeat in a thrusting groovy hipster magazine like this one, but the mods all worked as intended. My ideal bike.

Isn't it strange how perceptions can change for no obvious reason? I parked the big white beast up after our last run together; a sweet sprint from Andy Tiernan's remarkable emporium out in Suffolk back to the res in Cornwall and every time I passed by it in The Shed I would feel some indefinable warm glow. No no, not that. I was remembering great rides, great times; people encountered and roads conquered, that sort of thing. Manly beardy stuff.

And then quite suddenly I decided that I'd never ride it again so what was the point in keeping it? Just like that. I was shocked. No really, I really was. And I kept quiet about it. Sell my bike? The big white whale with a long and entirely entertaining history? Why?

I don't know why. Not really.

And of course I did nothing about it. I couldn't face advertising it and didn't want to offer it to my few sane friends because no one sane would want one when BMW and Honda build such marvellous and sensible

machines. In any case, I was certain that if it really was the right moment for it to go then someone would appear out of nowhere and say "Hey Frank; you still got that horrid old lorry? Wanna sell it at a huge price?"

But that didn't happen. I said nothing about selling it and none of my friends appears to be psychic. Disappointing.

Then one day, just like that and with no malice aforethought, I dropped a mail to a great pal in the Trade and wondered whether he'd like to take three of my bikes off my hands so I could generate a little room in the shed I like to refer to as The Shed. His response was immediate; was I feeling unwell? Had the modern twin evils of the great recession and austerity both invaded rural Bude and devoured both my bank balance and my sanity?

And of course he sold the noble old rattler in mere minutes and I am stood staring at a large gap in The Shed where previously had stood one of my favourite old bikes... ever. And I have a chunk of dosh in my bike account. You don't have a bike account? Open one now, it makes for

permanent domestic bliss. Trust me, I'm a journalist.

So, what to do? I have no idea what you would do in this situation, but I am currently scouring the ads, in magazines and online, for another bike. So far I've found two just like the machine I've just sold but both are damaged and need rebuilding and neither of them would be as good as the bike I've just sold. What I actually want, what I really want, is a T160 Trident. There are lots out there, remarkable considering how few were actually produced, but even though I am cash heavy I struggle to equate price asked with value for me. What some nutcase voice in my head keeps telling me to do is buy another Norton just like the other Norton and have it rebuilt to exactly my own tastes, and...

But that is just insane. Why would anyone even faintly sensible sell a great bike and then want to replace it with the same bike? It's nearly as insane as trading your one-year-old bike for a brand new version of the same bike but in a different colour and with a different number plate and paying a big chunk of money for the privilege. I've never understood why people do that.

My head hurts... **CBC**

*'I was certain that if it really was the right moment for it to go  
then someone would appear out of nowhere and say "Hey Frank;  
you still got that horrid old lorry? Wanna sell it?"'*

### WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

Frank Westworth is the editor of RealClassic magazine, the latest in a long series of publications that began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing The Jampot, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He was also founding editor of Classic Bike Guide and has returned as a penance. Or something. He has a mysterious obsession with riding obscure and elderly motorcycles, which he does very slowly...





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